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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1992
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# THE KILLING OF PROFESSOR CULIANU

On the last morning of his life, a charismatic University of Chicago Divinity School professor named Ioan Culianu taught a class on gnosticism, the study of secret mystic sects. One of his graduate students, Alexander Arguelles, was presenting a paper to the faculty for the first time that day. "I was nervous. He said, 'It's nothing to fear, just a rite of passage,'" Arguelles recounts. "He patted me on the back and smiled." Arguelles stops. "I'll never forget that smile."

Two hours later Culianu was dead of a single .25-caliber bullet wound to the back of the head. His execution-style murder in a campus bathroom stunned the school, terrified students, and stumped the Chicago police and the FBI. Now, after sixteen months, the crime looks more and more like what Culianu's friends suspected it was all along: the first political assassination of a professor on American soil.

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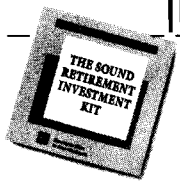


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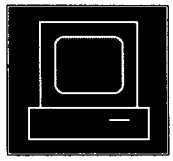

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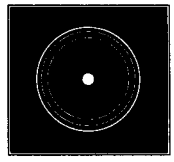

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# Letters to the *Editor*

## MOTHERS KNOW BEST?

Thanks for publishing Julie Rigby's memoir about being a single parent in graduate school, "White Palace" (June/July 1992). I thought it was a terrific commentary on graduate studies in general.

Reading how Rigby, a single mother, was able to have a very different kind of passage through the usual grad student experience helped me to understand why I, like some of Rigby's classmates, envy my fellow female graduate students who do have children. It also clarified why I have wished from time to time that I had a child of my own.

I can now see that behind my envy and child-longing is a more deeply felt wish to be perceived, like Rigby, from a different light, a light that would permit me to experience greater equality, acceptance, and security in the hallowed halls of academe. It's unsettling to think, though, that having a child and taking on the status of "mother" might be required before one is accepted and treated by faculty as a genuine fellow colleague.

Having heard from Rigby, who as one kind of "other" found an unexpected paradise in graduate school, I think it would be interesting to also hear from the woman briefly depicted in the essay as experiencing something altogether opposite. The person I have in mind is the brilliant, tall, blond graduate student who seemed to Rigby to "have it all" and yet had disclosed that she actually "felt like a fraud." I imagine that there are other women like her in graduate school struggling with the academic version of the "impostor syndrome." It would be very helpful to hear that kind of woman's story, too.

**Jennifer Stone,** *doctoral candidate, University of Colorado, Boulder*

I am just thrilled to pieces that Julie Rigby had such a positive experience in grad school. And it warms the cockles of my heart to know how accommodating and understanding the University of Iowa was to a single mother and her cute little tyke. I am sure there will be an influx of grad school applications from women with children positively papering its hallowed halls. Especially since the reality for so many of us has proven to be so terribly different. And I hope every one of us floods *Lingua Franca* with how different the grad school experience for women with children can be.

White Palace? Paradise? I began grad school at a prestigious private university in the Midwest whose brochures advertised a commitment to family and community values. When the head of the grad program initially interviewed me and discovered I had three adolescents, one husband, and a dog, he asked quite innocently, "So what are you doing here?"

The bottom line is that I couldn't attend the de rigueur teas, coffees, receptions, and luncheons because of my kids' school meetings, parent conferences, grocery shopping (thank heavens for 24 hour stores!), laundry, house cleaning, religious services and religious school classes, sports events, doctors' appointments and repair people's schedules. Even though my husband and kids helped out enormously, there was always a certain amount that fell to me. Running a house, raising kids, being married, attending classes, doing research and writing my first book took all my time. The political work of polishing apples and deferring to egotistical professors—most of whom were male, were either single or had spouses who did the necessary living stuff, and were convinced of their own indispensability to the literary world - could not make it onto my four-person calendars. And they made it very clear that my nonattendance at the so-called optional events would definitely hurt my standing for the Ph.D.

The only children welcomed in the grad office were those under five belonging to the faculty. Large, unkempt teenage types did not fit the "cute" criteria. At the few receptions open to spouses, as soon as the faculty and other grad students discovered

*Continued on page 77*

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# Field

## AND THE PROF RAN AWAY WITH THE SPOON

THEY ALWAYS COUNT THE silverware at Delaware's famous Winterthur Museum, home of one of the nation's top-drawer collections of decorative arts. But thanks to John Quentin Feller, a former professor of history at the University of Scranton and a widely respected authority on Chinese export ceramics, the curators are now counting everything twice. That's because last year Feller was discovered to have pinched from the museum a "finely crafted Chinese serving platter" that he was supposed to have been examining. Once found out, according to *The New York Times*, Feller soon confessed to "an eighteen-year criminal career in which he stole more than 100 precious objects from eight museums in the United States and England, making him one of the biggest art thieves of the century." What made the story even more curious was Feller's habit of donating many of the stolen objects to museums like the Peabody in Salem, Massachusetts. These gifts and loans predictably elicited gratitude (and, in the case of the Peabody, led to an invitation to join the museum's board of trustees), which led to more thefts, more gifts, and more honors, in what amounted to a one-man Kula Ring. The U.S. Attorney, however, was not impressed. Feller's transactions, he maintained, were no more than a strategy to "advance his career and standing in the academy and art community." But Feller's lawyer preferred a plea of diminished capacity, arguing that the artifacts were "surrogate objects" for a man suffering "an appalling poverty of interpersonal relationships." (Clearly the lawyer had never attended a history convention.)

At last report, though, Feller seemed to be hinting at a more supernatural explanation. According to the *Times* story, he allowed that his crimes were so unlike every other aspect of his life that "he could not exclude the possibility of demonic possession." Setting aside for the moment the unseemly suspicion that "every other aspect of Feller's life" was actually founded on his thefts, one can still find room to conjure with the possibility of a bewitched historian—especially in Salem. *—R.J. Lambrose*

## YES, BUT WHAT HAVE YOU PUBLISHED LATELY?

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE YOU TO PRODUCE A PUBLISHable paper these days? Months? Years? In the sciences, especially the formerly Soviet sciences, the time is down to a matter of days. According to *Science Watch*, a publication of the Institute for Scientific Information, three of the five most prolific scientists in the eighties were Soviet. Fifth on the list was Ferdinand Bohlmann, a German chemist who managed to synthesize some 572 papers between 1981 and 1990. But the easy winner was Yury T. Struchkov, a Russian chemist who somehow cranked out 948 papers during the same decade. For those of you already reaching for your calculators, that's a paper every 3.9 days. How does he do it, you ask? Well, for one thing, he doesn't waste time reading items like this.

*—R.J. Lambrose*

## LOST IN TRANSLATION

A WORD OF CAUTION FOR all those language scholars thinking of making a few bucks on the side by doing a popular translation of, say, the Tel el Amarna letters from the original Akkadian: Don't poll your colleagues about what you should charge. At least that seems to be one lesson emerging from the Federal Trade Commission's investigation of possible price fixing by the American Translators Association.

The trouble began in 1987, when, according to a report in *The New York Times*, the ATA started publishing fee guidelines for the benefit of its members, many of whom are freelancers and some of whom are academics. The FTC launched the price-fixing investigation in 1990.

Neither party is talking much about the current status of the probe—the FTC won't discuss it at all, and Leslie Willson, the ATA's president and a professor of German at the University of Texas, will say only that the association has not (yet) been charged with any violations or had to pay any fines. "It's a private investigation, and we don't admit to it," he says. (Frank Patton, Jr., an attorney representing the translators' group, confirms that the FTC investigation is still under way, and that his



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client is cooperating.)

But if ATA officials aren't talking, other translators are—with dismay. To them, the investigation highlights the dilemma of all kinds of free-lancers who want to organize and get paid decently without being nailed for antitrust violations. Snaps Ethel Dunn, a California-based ATA member whose professional mainstay is translating social science articles from English to Russian and vice versa, "I'm incensed at the investigation, at the idea that somehow translators aren't allowed to talk about fees. You've got to allow people to get paid decently. If we can't talk together about rates, the poor translator is at the mercy of his publisher."

According to Dunn, a literary or scholarly translator typically commands the paltry fee of $40 or $50 per 1,000 translated words. "And it can be hard sometimes to do a thousand words in a whole day," Dunn grumbles, "if the material is difficult and you have to stop sometimes and look things up." (Which might explain why only about 10 percent of the ATA's 4,000 members specialize in literary and academic translation; the rest are in the more commercial business of translating technical and business documents, which commands about twice as much per hour.)

Eric Greenleaf, a marketing professor and pricing expert at New York University's Stern School of Business, however, says that the fact that many translators pull in trifling sums would be no excuse for the ATA to recommend rates. "The issue with the translators' association is not whether they make much money," Greenleaf says. "The issue is whether they're price fixing." To change the antitrust laws to excuse small, penurious groups like the ATA, Greenleaf declares, "would be extremely complicated legally, and probably that level of vagueness would be unconstitutional—it wouldn't grant equal protection under the law."

But should the FTC, which can pick and choose its investigatory targets, spend its time, not to mention the taxpayers' money, going after the likes of the ATA?

Among the more vocal naysayers is Paul Basista, the executive director of the Graphic Artists Guild, a national group which was investigated by the FTC four years ago for publishing rate information in its members' handbook. "The ironic thing is that under the Reagan-Bush administrations the FTC is leaning on little organizations like mine, while at the same time ignoring flagrant cases like Martin Sorrell's," Basista says, referring to the advertising-empire builder who in the heady eighties bought up mega–ad agencies J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather to


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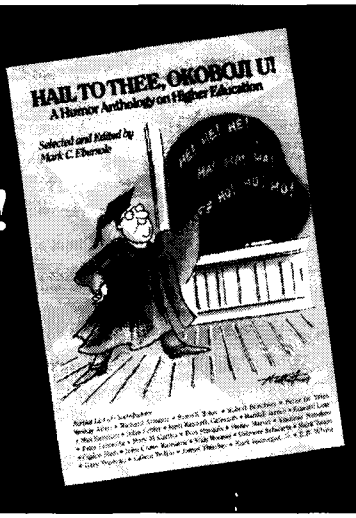


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# Field *Notes*

form a giant conglomerate.

The guild, which "never makes any rate recommendations—just publishes information about what artists say they've gotten," according to Basista, apparently passed muster with the FTC, which dropped its investigation without taking any action. But Basista complains that the investigation was "an expensive annoyance. We had to retain a trade specialist at the tune of $250 an hour. In total, the investigation cost $10,000 of our members' money."

The ATA is keeping mum about its past practices—when asked to confirm that the association did publish annual guidelines in its newsletter, Willson will say only, "We want to forget about that." So it's hard to determine what grounds the FTC has for its investigation. If the association was indeed in the business of *recommending* standard rates, it probably violated antitrust laws; if it only reported what the going rates were, it may have been on safe legal ground. Frank Patton, the ATA's attorney, protests that the translators' group has been the very model of compliance with antitrust laws, having adopted a "formal, strong" antitrust policy eight or nine months before the start of the investigation. "We don't know what provoked the investigation," Patton says. "Our response to the FTC has been, 'Gee whiz, we adopted what ought to be considered a model antitrust policy. We ought to be congratulated instead of investigated.'"

*The investigation highlights the dilemma of translators who want to get paid decently without being nailed for antitrust violations.*

In any event, the ATA hasn't beaten a full-scale retreat on rate guidelines: As of the beginning of this year, the association's newsletter was still listing for members' reference the fees paid by the State Department, one of the nation's biggest purchasers of translation services. But the FTC investigation has already had a chilling effect on at least one other professional translators' group. According to the *Voice Literary Supplement*, the PEN American Center, a writers' organization that counts more than 200 translators among its members, published a pamphlet in 1985 urging readers not to accept less than $40 per 1,000 translated words. But call the PEN Center today, and you'll find they've clammed up tight.

"If we ever used to recommend rates, we've stopped because of a legal case involving another organization, which I really can't talk about," says Joan Dalin, coordinator of the center's translation committee. "No, I can't send you a copy of the 1985 pamphlet—we've stopped sending out any old material with things like rate suggestions."

—*Sue Young Wilson*



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# PRESENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW COLDER

Benno Schmidt

COMMENTATORS HAVE offered a variety of explanations for Benno Schmidt's precipitous departure from the presidency of Yale after only six years, not least of which were the various attractions of Chris Whittle's Kentucky Fried Children venture: no teachers, no unions, and as yet, no alumni. But our own guess is that Schmidt's decision was driven by a careful reading of the January/February 1992 issue of the *Journal of Higher Education.*

*The best known college presidents are invariably the least loved.*

There—with appropriate social science fanfare—Robert Birnbaum revealed that "perceptions of presidential effectiveness may be inversely related to term of office." Or in English: The more faculty members get to know their presidents, the less they like them. One study Birnbaum cited found that new presidents (in office fewer than three years) had high levels of support at three quarters of campuses, whereas "old" presidents (appointed more than five years ago) were similarly appreciated by only one quarter of their faculties.

Some skeptics—particularly college presidents—might dismiss such views as characteristic of what Yale's ex-dean Donald Kagan (in the *Wall Street Journal*) has termed an "imperial faculty." "Faculty members," notes another recent study in the higher education literature, "almost universally discount the performance of their current presidents at a rate that must be 25 to 75 percent below that of other observers." That difference seems implausible when judged in the light of another pollster, Louis Harris, who discovered in *his* most recent survey that only one quarter of *all* Americans had a "great deal of confidence" in college presidents. Here, too, familiarity seems to be breeding contempt. Only twenty-five years ago, more than three fifths of Americans had confidence in those running their universities.

But then again, twenty-five years ago a majority of Americans also believed Richard Nixon had a "secret plan" to end the war in Vietnam. And though Americans may trust politicians even less than college presidents these days —at least according to the polls—they still seem to prefer their presidents and their plans to remain undefined.

—*R.J. Lambrose*


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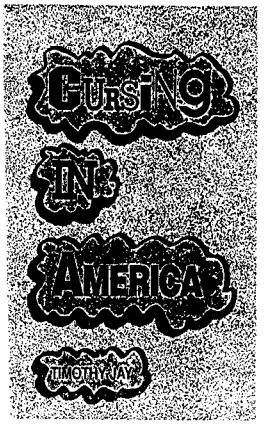


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# Field *Notes*

## ALL IT TAKES IS $27,000 AND A DREAM

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S English department, this was the Year of the Crisis. First there was the University Budget Crisis, and that spawned the Chairman Crisis, in which the head of the English department—along with twenty-five other department heads—threatened to quit. Next came the Carolyn Heilbrun Crisis, in which the distinguished feminist scholar took her early retirement as an opportunity to publicly damn what she deemed the department's intractable sexism.

The last entry on this list was the Graduate Student Crisis. At the end of the year, the department announced that the Ph.D. program would take substantially fewer students from its master's degree class than it had pledged to at the beginning of the year. The department made the unpopular cut, shutting out twenty-two of the fifty students who had planned to go on for their doctorates. But under pressure from the administration, the department backpedaled and readmitted two students who had been rejected. When other students protested, it simply readmitted three more. The upshot is not only a minibudget crisis in the department, but a general sense of chaotic mismanagement and less-than-entirely-fair play.

Unlike most universities, Columbia makes it a matter of policy to admit more students into its master's degree English program than it can afford to keep. Competition for the few Ph.D. slots is nasty—a mas-

## NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

THE OLD ADAGE THAT A CONSERVATIVE IS A LIBERAL who has been mugged might now be revised to something like a materialist is a poststructuralist who has watched a police mugging. Or at least that's the conclusion we draw from the Society for Cinema Studies's recent protest against the verdict in the Rodney King beating case. A petition signed by more than 180 members at their recent meeting in Pittsburgh pointed out that "[e]ven with visual evidence, blacks' experience of police brutality does not count."

Visual evidence. An odd phrase coming from such a densely pixelated hypertextual construction as the Society for Cinema Studies. And according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, some of the society's more theory-minded members did indeed fret that an invocation of the documentary status of Rodney King's videotaped beating would betray the Popular Front Against the "Ideology of the Visible." But "the heat of a political moment," one member explained, apparently disposed of the society's qualms about deploying "the discourses of realism." At least this time. —*R.J. Lambrose*



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ter's degree in English doesn't get you very far these days—but not as nasty as it used to be. Three years ago, after a student protest, the department trimmed admissions; where as many as ninety students had once duked it out for twenty-five spots, now only forty were supposed to do so, with some thirty places reserved for them. Last year, however, more students than anticipated decided to attend; a sluggish economy kept them there. "We were in a crunch of unexpected proportions," says David Damrosch, director of graduate studies.

Now students and faculty are once again questioning the ultimate wisdom of the entire setup—forcing new graduate students to endure not just the usual jockeying for position but an academic war of nerves. The program's peculiar financial structure poses another ethical quandary: About half the master's students pay full tuition, money that helps to fund scholarship packages for many of the doctoral candidates. (Ph.D. students are guaranteed funding.) The first year, in other words, is a lottery: Many students pay for the right to compete against their peers, while their money subsidizes more advanced students.

Columbia is not the only university to finance its graduate English program this way. The University of Chicago and the University of Virginia do too, although UVA plans to abandon the practice next year. "It was just causing too many emotional problems among the students," says Katherine Maus, who heads the UVA English department's admissions committee. Maus stresses that the system had its advantages—for one thing, it allowed the school to take risks on students who might be unimpressive on paper but could prove themselves in graduate classes.

If a school is determined to make a cut, Maus adds, there are ways to ease the pain. One is to make sure that students understand that it's coming; another is to make sure they know how they'll be judged. This year, Columbia did neither. "At the very first meeting of the year, they told us about the cut—and said it would be fewer than a third of us," says Jonathan Gill, a first-year student who was ultimately readmitted. Says Damrosch, "We did not give students a clear picture."

And the faculty never told students how they were going to be evaluated—largely because they didn't know. In previous years, the committee weeded out the class on the basis of evaluations and grades or, in borderline cases, on a committee member's report. This year, all four members read the master's essay of every student whose future was in question—and sometimes overrode the opinions of


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# Field *Notes*

their colleagues.

The outcome pleased no one. In his seminar, Professor Karl Kroeber had given one first-year student, Nicholas Gianakouros, an A+; when he learned that Gianakouros hadn't even made the waiting list, he wondered why the school was kicking out "the kind of student I'm in the business for." Heilbrun was even angrier. Only one of her seminar students had been accepted into the Ph.D. program, although Heilbrun had written four enthusiastic recommendations. "The way that Damrosch behaved was shocking, second-guessing other faculty members like that," she says. "They were interfering in young people's lives to get back at me."

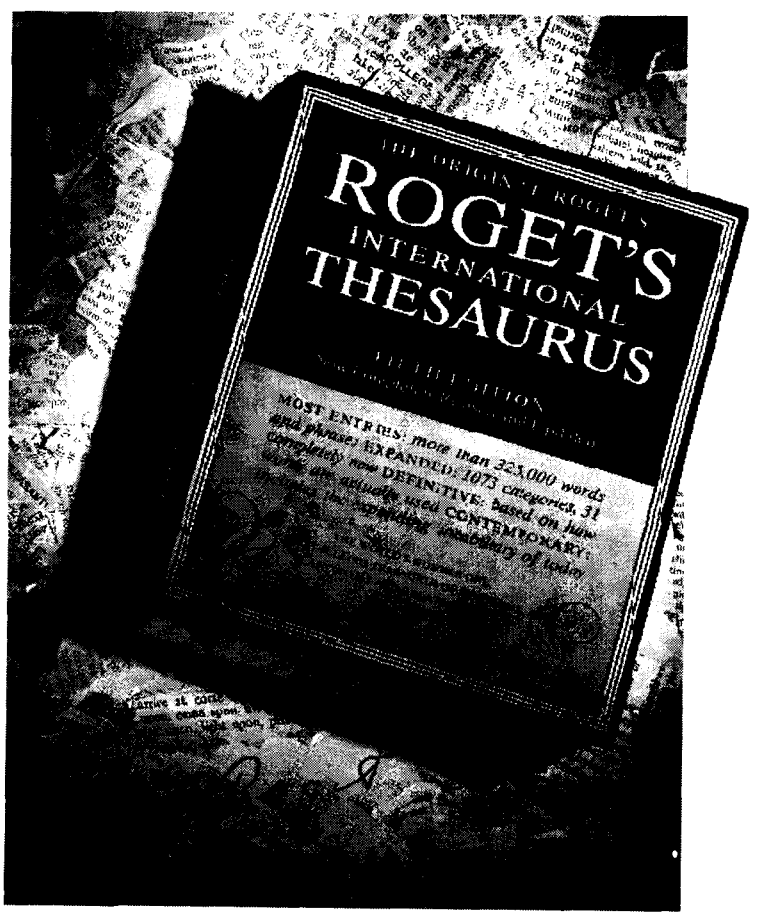
Damrosch and others counter that Heilbrun's evaluations, though praise-filled, were short and uninformative. (The students Heilbrun recommended, however, were ultimately among those readmitted.)

The administration beat its retreat when the dean of the graduate school, Roger Bagnall, received an indignant letter from Jonathan Gill, then another letter from his father. With lawyerly deftness, Gill, a twenty-seven-year-old former *New York Times* clerk and Associated Press reporter, had pointed out a troubling discrepancy: Gill's fellowship letter promised six years of funding, as long as he maintained reasonable academic standards; it never mentioned a cut. "It didn't take a legal mind to read the letter and say, this leaves the university vulnerable on legal grounds," says Bagnall. "The department had made a commitment to students that it was not honoring."

Bagnall ordered the department to readmit Gill and Gianakouros, who also held a fellowship. But – when three waiting-list students, who held no fellowships but who had ranked higher than Gill and Gianakouros, found out, they too complained to Bagnall; this time, the department says, it voluntarily changed its mind.

Paradoxically, Bagnall's well-intended gesture may result in even more unfairness. Unless the fellowship letters are reworded, only tuition-paying students will be required to compete in next year's lottery, since those on fellowship are now entitled to automatic readmission.

And what about the students who didn't make a stink? Kroeber is dubious about their chances in academia, and thinks they've been victims of a certain institutional callousness. "We're getting better students than we've had for fifteen years," he says. But, he adds, "anyone who's cut will have a real problem getting into another program at the same intellectual level." —*Judith Shulevitz*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# BREAKTHROUGH BOOKS ADOLESCENCE

*We asked five people who write about teenagers to tell us about the most provocative books published in the last few years on the subject of adolescence.*

Donna Gaines, sociologist, journalist, and social worker; author of *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids* (1991).

"The best work on adolescence has been done in British cultural studies," says Gaines. But among American books, **Terry Williams's *The Cocaine Kids: The Inside Story of a Teenage Drug Ring*** (Addison-Wesley, 1989) is "outstanding. Williams hung out with inner-city kids who were organized to work in the cocaine trade" and did "very good reporting on what the life is like, who these kids are, and why they do it. He makes the point that, *yes*, this is a criminal activity" but he also advances "the standard sociological argument that young people are doing these things to get economic opportunity for themselves when the usual opportunities are blocked. His ethics are righteous. He's nonexploitative."

Gaines also has warm words for **Leon Bing's *Do or Die: For the First Time, Members of L.A.'s Most Notorious Teenage Gangs—The Crips and the Bloods—Speak for Themselves*** (HarperCollins, 1991): "Bing is helpful because she shows how suburban and inner-city kids are angry for the same reasons. They want good, whole lives, and they want loyalty. Yet their aspirations are blocked."

Anne Petersen, professor at the Institute for Child Development, University of Minnesota; co-author of the forthcoming *Promoting Adolescent Health.*

Over the last ten or fifteen years, says Petersen, the field of adolescent studies has grown so dramatically and in such a cross-disciplinary way "that it's useful to have a comprehensive compendium of research." She thinks ***At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent,*** edited by **S. Shirley Feldman** and **Glen R. Elliott** (Harvard University Press, 1990), fits that bill.

"Also excellent," says Petersen, is ***Multiple Problem Youth,*** edited by **D.S. Elliott,** et al. (Springer-Verlag, 1989): "Everyone's been talking about how kids with problems have more than *one* problem, and yet there's absolutely no recognition of that in previous research. This book marshals data to show how that works, distinguishing the developmental problems of lower- and middle-class kids and telling how middle-class kids move beyond their problems, and lower-class kids don't."

Andrew Ross, professor of English at Princeton University and organizer of the upcoming Princeton conference "Youth Music and Youth Culture."

"At the moment, alas, we have no *Growing Up Absurd*, so I'd suggest looking more at films and music and comics than at books to find out about youth." Ross recommends **Penelope Spheeris's** films ***Suburbia*** and ***The Decline of Western Civilization,*** parts I and II, about punk and heavy metal, respectively, and the books of cartoonists **Lynda Barry, Matt Groenig,** and the **Hernandez brothers,** whose comic strip "The Complete Love and Rockets Series" is about "a couple of lesbian punkettes in the L.A. barrio."

In scholarly books, Ross especially likes **Angela McRobbie's *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*** (Unwin Hyman, 1990): "Working in the Birmingham school tradition, McRobbie is one of the few people who've bridged the world of ethnographic sociology and cultural theory while getting inside the minds and bodies of adolescents."

Bea Mandel, executive director of PRIDE (Policy Research and Intervention for Development in Early Adolescence), a project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York at Penn State University.

Mandel thinks highly of ***Childhood's Future: Listening to the American Family—Hope and Solutions for the Next Generation,*** by **Richard Louv** (Houghton Mifflin, 1991), because "Louv has done a national survey not only of parents and teachers but of kids themselves. He's gotten the kids' view of how they feel about being the first real video and computer generation."

Mandel also calls ***There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America,*** by **Alex Kotlowitz** (Doubleday, 1991), "exceptional. The story of two brothers in the Henry Horner projects in Chicago, it details what it's like to grow up in a neighborhood where opportunities are far overshadowed by risks."

A.M. Homes, fiction writer; author of the novel *Jack*, which was first published in hardcover for a young adult audience in 1989 and then as a paperback for adults in 1990.

"Psychological literature recognizes kids as incredibly complicated sexual beings. But in fiction there's rarely a representation of this. If you get into it, you're considered a pervert." Homes says a fine exception to that tendency is **Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits*** (Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), "a novel about a black boy who's growing up gay in North Carolina. He feels he's been possessed by a demon, and he's literally trying to rid himself of it. The imagery is incredibly powerful because it externalizes the internal: Most fictional writing about adolescence tends to be very *internal* and very slight."

*—Molly McQuade*



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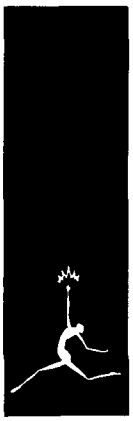

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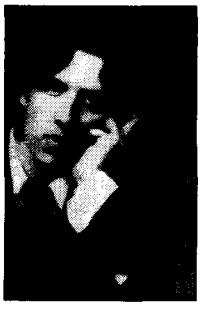

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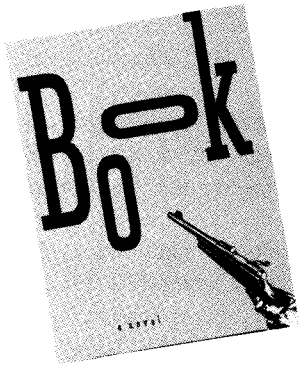
# Inside *Publishing*

## CRIMES AGAINST LITERATURE




Bedside reading of the month: *Book*, a tartly amusing novel of academic ill manners written by University of Oregon English professor Robert Grudin and just published by Random House. The novel beats up on college administrators (remarking that the best suited for the job are "dead to nuance and phobic to original ideas"), departmental backbiters (on the personal loyalty and integrity scale, the hero's Labrador retriever ranks considerably higher than most of his colleagues), and critical theorists (*Book*'s requisite deconstructionist is a tightly wound nut case with a high-powered rifle and a taste for junk food). As a judge of literary value, Grudin takes the dimmest possible view of newfangled theories, but as a writer, he is slyly experimental: The novel's bricolage of styles incorporates a section in which balky footnotes rebel and start talking back to the text.

Authors who have watched in horror as their books slip quietly into the dark night of remainderdom will be fascinated by the crime at the heart of *Book*: a "libricide" in which indifferent publishers, tone-deaf reviewers, and jealous colleagues conspire to drive an idiosyncratic masterwork out of print.

## ALTHUSSER AGONISTES

UPI/BETTMANN

Louis Althusser

On a rainy Sunday morning in 1980, in an apartment near the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser strangled his wife. Though he lived another ten years, Althusser never spoke in public about the crime, in part because he never stood trial for it, having escaped homicide charges on the grounds of insanity. But Althusser, who spent most of his remaining years in a psychiatric hospital, apparently felt some need to answer for the killing and to investigate the madness that enveloped it. In 1985 he began writing an autobiography, a disturbing document in which this most ostensibly rational of Marxist thinkers presents himself as a figure of Artaudian anguish, convinced of his own fraudulence and prone to bone-shaking depressions. Like some eerily obliging demonstration of his friend Michel Foucault's theories of madness, Althusser seems to have swung between lucidity and dementia in a way that calls into question any firm division between those categories.

Althusser's nephew and heir discovered the 300-page autobiographical manuscript among the philosopher's papers after his death and decided that it would "be a shame to leave this text in obscurity." He gave it to the French publishing house Stock, which in April released it under the title *L'Avenir dure longtemps*. Widely and admiringly reviewed, the book has become a pretext for reflecting with morbid fascination on the fate not only of one Marxist theoretician but of Marxist theory itself. Over the next two years, Stock is planning to bring out at least three more volumes of posthumous Althusser, including journals, correspondence, and a philosophical work on Machiavelli. And in the United States, the New Press, the publishing venture headed by former Pantheon editor Andre Schiffrin, has acquired the rights to this autopathography and will publish it next fall.

A sort of case history narrated by the patient himself, *L'Avenir* works backward from the murder, though Althusser's recollections of it are spotty. One moment, he claims, he was tenderly massaging his wife Helene's neck; the next, he was "struck with terror" to see her slumped at his feet. If not exactly overdetermined, the murder was not wholly unexpected either. When they met, in 1948, Althusser was a thirty-year-old virgin; his first sexual encounter with Helene overwhelmed him with "feelings of terror and revulsion" and triggered his first breakdown. A militant Jewish communist who had been active in the Resistance, Helene was later accused of being a double agent and expelled from the party. Althusser says he joined the French Communist party to help clear Helene's name but then found himself voting, in a sort of fugue state, to purge her.

The book makes clear the extent of his submission to Stalinist party discipline, details his



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frequent hospitalizations and harrowing bouts of electroshock, and vents his lifelong sense of being an impostor. In *L'Avenir dure longtemps*, the man who taught philosophy to generations of students at the Ecole Normale admits to having read "little" Hegel, "scarcely any" Spinoza, Heidegger, or Husserl, and "not to have understood Freud." The brilliant author of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* confesses that he has read only the early Marx and the first volume of *Capital*: "I who aspired to sending Marxism along the sure road of science, was...'an imaginary Marxist'...full of fakery and artifice." It was the circumstances of his childhood, he believed, that had "stripped [him] of any personality of [his] own": Althusser's mother named him after the dead aviator who had been her one great love and whose older brother she had married in a burst of self-destructive grief. "My mother," he writes, "loved my uncle Louis, not me."

In France, the book has opened up a debate about whether Althusser's pathologies can be made to serve as metaphors for the dogmatic excesses of communism; whether his frequent, devastating losses of control are what made the hermetic stability of a closed ideological system so appealing to him; and whether the autobiography, published at a time when Marxists are heading in droves for the drawing board, amounts to a kind of cancellation of the *oeuvre* that went before it. As one reviewer put it: "Since Althusser died at virtually the same moment as state communism, it seems only fair to ask whether this extraordinary autobiography, so lapidary and courageous, will outlast his celebrated *For Marx*." In the United States, where Althusser is a less familiar figure (and end-of-ideology gloating more commonplace), an introduction to the English edition might place his curious confession in historical context and contribute to a similar discussion. But the New Press hasn't commissioned an introduction. The assumption, says David Sternbach, an editor at the press, is that "anyone who wants to buy this book will already know a lot about Althusser."


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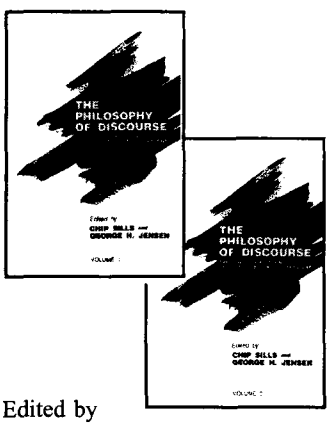


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# Inside *Publishing*

## GRAND THEFT AUTO

Stealing another writer's words and representing them as your own is called plagiarism, and you're not supposed to do it. But what if the words you pilfer and republish are your own? Is that an ethical lapse or a perfectly defensible, maybe even unconscious, repackaging of favorite ideas and metaphors?

A couple of recent articles on scholarly practices assay this phenomenon, which, it turns out, has a name: self-plagiarism. It "must be distinguished," writes University of Calgary professor Irving Hexham in *Humanities Computing*, "from the recycling of one's own work which to a greater or lesser extent everyone legitimately does. Self-plagiarism occurs

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when no indication is given that the work is being recycled and where a clear effort has been made, through changing the paragraph breaks, capitalization, and the substitution of English with foreign terms to cause the reader to believe they are reading something completely new." Even the kind of twice- (and thrice-) told tales that academia explicitly encourages can sometimes, says Hexham, shade into self-plagiarism: "To republish the same material in a misleadingly changed but unrevised form in two books, and to further publish articles which reprint material found in the books and theses as though the articles contain new work and are thus worthy of merit is the type of self-plagiarism which should be condemned."

Working with those criteria, Yale librarian Martha Brogan seems to have caught a self-plagiarizer red-handed. In a review in the September *College and Research Libraries* of Irving Louis Horowitz's *Communicating Ideas: The Politics of Scholarly Publishing* (Transaction Publishers, 1991) Brogan says that Horowitz, an expert on intellectual property, fails to acknowledge that a full twenty of the twenty-four essays in his book had been published previously. Coming clean about prior publication is, Brogan writes, "not only a matter of professional courtesy and consumer respect but also of copyright compliance." Though Horowitz *does* say that *ten* of the essays had been published elsewhere, he also says that they have been "substantially rewritten, revised, and expanded"—a claim with which Brogan begs to differ. By her reckoning, the changes are all superficial, along the lines of merging paragraphs and substituting synonyms.

There is a little bit of the self-plagiarizer in every writer who can't stand to use a cherished phrase or image—so hard-won, so infinitely lovely!—just once. But for academics, the temptation to recycle entire arguments and chunks of research can be irresistible. Scholarly careers are launched by stripping the dissertation for spare parts and made by publishing prolifically on a specialized topic. Repeating yourself may make you a bore, but it doesn't make you a thief unless you start getting sneaky about it. Self-plagiarism is "a fairly benign form" of appropriation, says Thomas Mallon, author of the 1989 book *Stolen Words: Forays*


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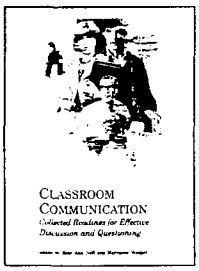


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# Inside *Publishing*

## SEX AND THE SINGLE SURREALIST

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

André Breton

*into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism.* "But if you deliberately, say, take the same article from one obscure journal and try to place it in another obscure journal, especially without *telling* the second journal, then a lot of the elements of other kinds of plagiarism are in place. It becomes an attempt to defraud readers and publishers. It's just that there's one less victim because the other writer you're stealing from is yourself."

Picture a surrealist confab that was part towel-slapping locker room palaver, part high-minded sexological inquiry. Imagine the likes of André Breton, Max Ernst, Louis Aragon, and Yves Tanguy gabbing about their sexual fantasies and experiences like the overheated callers on Jessica Hahn's party line. What you'd get is *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Research, 1928–1932*, a sort of jazz-age *Vox*, which Verso will publish in November.

The book assembles the transcripts, never before published in their entirety, of twelve roundtable discussions about sex attended by a shifting band of surrealist poets, artists, and fellow travelers. André Breton was always there. Antonin Artaud dropped in to raise havoc; a mysterious Madame Lena and a lusty defrocked Jesuit made guest appearances. Eager to investigate the carnal dimensions of *l'amour fou,* the fellas (as they mostly were) talked about wet dreams, favorite positions (69 and "so-called doggie style" prevailed), whether it is possible to determine with any certainty whether a woman has had an orgasm (a matter of wistful, persistent debate throughout the sessions), and whether it would be good to lick your lover's eyeball or stick your penis in her ear.

The surrealists who gathered to talk so volubly dirty were persuaded for the most part of an indissoluble link between love and sex; as Breton put it: "I have never slept with a woman whom I did not believe I could love. Naturally, I have often been mistaken." They


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were also determined to be honest. The book is full of exchanges as frank as this one:

ANDRÉ BRETON: To what extent does Aragon think an erection is necessary in the accomplishment of the sexual act?

LOUIS ARAGON: Some degree of erection is necessary, but in my case I've never had anything but semi-erections.

ANDRÉ BRETON: Do you regret that?

LOUIS ARAGON: As much as any other physical failure, and no more. I don't regret it any more than being unable to lift pianos.

And this:

ANDRÉ BRETON: We discussed the question of bestiality very briefly in an earlier session. Since everyone present declared their antipathy to it and claimed they had never had any tendency in this direction, there was no point in pursuing it.

JEAN BALDENSPERGER: On the contrary I think we should pursue it, because it provides my introduction to sexual pleasure. I had a female donkey, who is still alive, with whom I had very close relations for a year.

You could read *Investigating Sex* as a refutation of the line that surrealism was intractably misogynist, for these guys seem to have been deeply interested in dismantling sexual stereotypes and endorsing women's erotic pleasure. You could also, of course, read it for fun.

*—Margaret Talbot*


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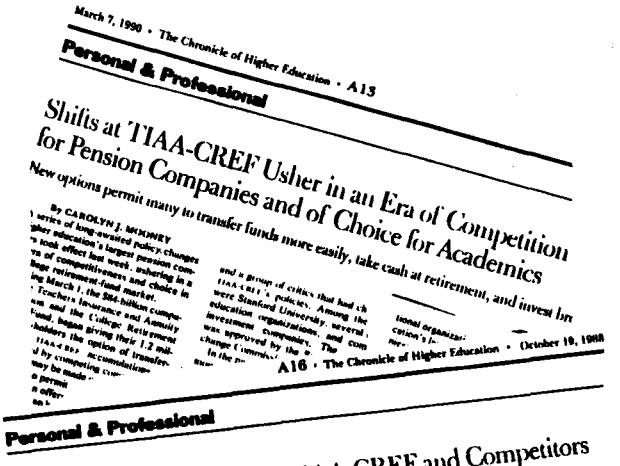
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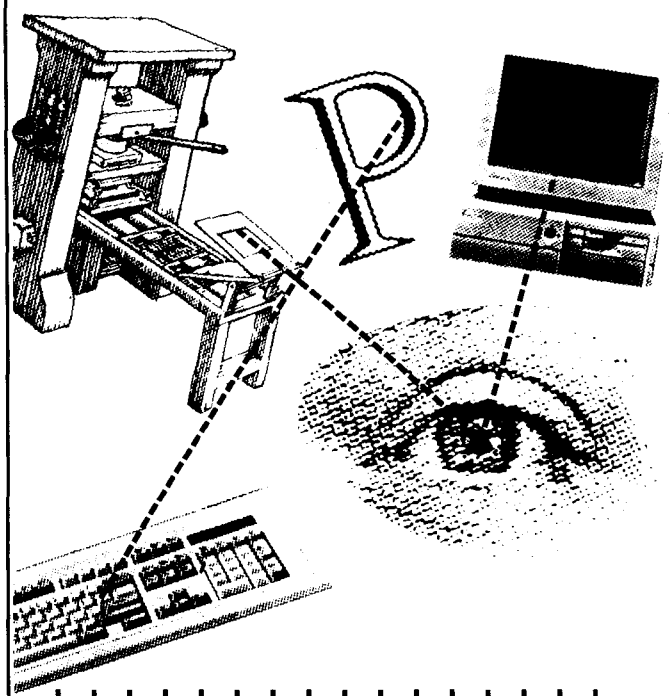

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**JOURNALESE...**

MUST READ: "The Availability and Use of Books in Libraries in Nineteenth-Century Bendigo, Australia," by Ushi Kwasitsu, ***Libraries and Culture***, Spring '92.

It's Pierre Bourdieu versus Hope, Michael et al. in "Representing the Enterprising Self: *thirtysomething* and Contemporary Consumer Culture," by Frances Bonner and Paul du Gay, ***Theory, Culture & Society***, May '92. The authors argue that *thirtysomething* "encapsulates and

## THE MANY FACES OF IAN HACKING

"One thing that distinguishes **History of the Human Sciences** from a range of other journals," its chieftains declare in an editorial introducing the Spring '92 issue, "is that we are not *primarily* concerned with a report back from the archive."

Score one for understatement. That same issue of the interdisciplinary SAGE Publications quarterly, which trumpets its concern with "expanding our understanding of the human and humanly made world," kicks off with Ian Hacking's "Multiple Personality Disorder and Its Hosts." Most intellectuals know Hacking as a feisty philosopher of science and language, formerly at Stanford, now at the University of Toronto. But close observers of the "human" side of philosophy also recall that Professor Hacking, true to the journal's ethos, has proved spectacularly human himself—a specialist in probability theory with a flair for the improbable.

Back in February 1981, in an incident reported by the *San Jose Mercury News* that subsequently made it onto philosophy grapevines, Hacking, then acting chair of the Stanford Philosophy Department, was arrested by Palo Alto police for displaying a personality too out of line with what the force had come to expect from local tweedies. To be precise, he was charged by the Santa Clara County district attorney's office with battery on a police officer, resisting police, and committing malicious mischief on a police car.

According to the *Mercury News*, police had responded to a call reporting a person in need of medical assistance at the Stanford philosophy department, where a meeting of the West Coast Aristotelian Society was taking place. One officer, looking through the glass door of Hacking's office, saw him lying on the floor, face down. The paper reported that Hacking refused an offer of medical aid, then attacked Officer Brian Wax, swinging at him, kicking, and shouting obscenities.

Subdued and handcuffed, Hacking was taken to North County Jail in Palo Alto. On the way, the *Mercury News* reported, Hacking "allegedly kicked the door of the police car out of shape." The newspaper added that he "initially refused to cooperate with booking procedures but finally relented. He spent part of the evening in a padded cell and was released without bail at 1:40 A.M." Hacking eventually got five out of six charges dismissed by copping a plea on a public disturbance charge. He received a suspended sentence and two months summary probation, and had to pay restitution costs.

In "Multiple Personality Disorder and Its Hosts," Hacking provocatively writes of people with multiple personalities as a "thoroughly visible minority, particularly in North America." He refers to the individual with multiple personalities as "a kind of person rather than a kind of patient" because, he notes, "people with multiple personalities may now be starting to identify themselves, and sometimes to band together in mutual support, becoming somewhat autonomous of the medical profession that first characterized them."

In short, Hacking asserts, they're becoming a "movement." Hacking reports that when he subscribed to **Dissociation: The Official Journal of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation,** return mail brought him not just the journal, but a kind of diploma and a flier bearing the exhortation, "Be proud of your commitment to the field of multiple personality and dissociative disorders."

"We are not," he remarks drily, "on purely medical territory."

Hacking's article efficiently portrays MPD (multiple personality disorder) as a concept with a rich lineage, traceable to such nineteenth-century notions as "double consciousness." The overarching theme is that MPD can be understood



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*By Carlin Romano*

metaphorically as a kind of "parasite" concept that flourishes in "host" cultural theories, such as nineteenth-century positivism or current thought about "child abuse." He fashionably maintains that "there is in certain respects no fact of the matter about the patient's condition outside of her actual medical and social milieu." He entertainingly touches on mass-media depictions with wonderful titles (*The Five of Me: Tell Me Who I Am Before I Die*), as well as crises within the psychoanalytic community.

The only thing missing, as in most humanist scholarship about the intensely human and personal, is the personality of the human who wrote the article. Do tell, Professor Hacking.

## MANY ARE CALLED...

**Common Knowledge,** another new interdisciplinary creation pledged to destroy the academic cliches that divide us (see "Inside Publishing," April/May 1992), got off to a spectacular start with its inaugural Spring issue.

The cover announced it as the "Spring '92" issue.

The title page announced it as the "Spring '91" issue.

Clever stuff when it comes to tenth-anniversary time, not to mention a daring rebuke to more timid postmodern journal editors, known for ranting endlessly about "the softness of facts" but running their journals like nerdy positivists.

Having made their point, the editors return to consistent numbering in Vol. 1, Number 2, the Fall '92 issue. Now they violate reader expectations only by continuing their sprightly feature from their debut issue, "Calls for Papers," in which luminous intellectuals are invited to boldly bypass the journal's menu, even its specials, and order directly from the kitchen.

*This crew of superstars could be back every issue, until only earmuffs could block out their calls.*

Committed to publishing work that "redefines divisive terms and figures of the past," the triquarterly offered, in its first issue, such *cris de coeur* as Stephen Toulmin imploring scholars to take back intellectual positions they no longer hold; Frank Kermode calling for papers on whether there are "ways of acceptably restating the value and importance" of putatively great works of art; Paul Feyerabend calling for a "continuous wake-up call" to scholars about world suffering outside the academy and then, later in the section, for papers on poverty and economic growth; and Eugene Genovese calling for essays that philosophically explore the problem of "Balkanization."

The just-published second issue, with the journal's editorial board now swollen to 45, presents Kwame Anthony Appiah, Joseph Frank, and Stanley N. Katz calling for a major article "that addresses the philosophical problems attendant upon crossing hermeneutic frontiers"; Richard Rorty urging confessions by major intellectuals of their inner-life conversations with some other great intellectual; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Hugh Kenner calling for papers "that discredit pluralism"; and—*wait*—Frank Kermode and Stephen Toulmin calling for papers "on the past and meaning of the academic disciplines, and on the role of periodization in constituting the framework of our knowledge"; and—*wait again*—Kwame Anthony Appiah and Charles Taylor asking for "articles on the distinction between intellectual skepticism and theological or effective antinomianism"; and—*wait a third time*—Toulmin ganged up yet again with Joseph Frank and Jacques Le Goff.

Aren't these guys ordering just a little too often?

In the newspaper business, analysts now like to discuss the "unbundled newspaper." That's what they're calling the broadsheet of the future that allows each consumer to selectively order his or her own newspaper, section by section, and hence to design it. **Common Knowledge** may be flirting with the "unbundled journal" by permitting top scholars to be its pioneer consumers. That risks undermining the shaky consensus that gives most journals their marginal coherence.

But one detects a far more immediate danger.

promotes a development of particular significance: a new 'regime of the self.'"

No comment yet from series creators Ed Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz.

INSIGHT OF THE SEASON: In "Passages to Play: Paradox and Process," by Don Handelman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in **Play and Culture: The Official Journal of the Association for the Study of Play:** "The message 'This is play' creates a boundary between not-play and play."



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**— Elaine Showalter, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT**

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# The *Periodical* Table

Even distinguished scholars, roped on rare occasions into doubling as great teachers, know that it's easier to call for papers than to write them. Given carte blanche, this crew of self-possessed superstars could be back every month, until only earmuffs can keep us from hearing Feyerabend demand papers on the ethics of asking waiters for more water, and Kermode and Toulmin petition for articles unpacking the canonicity of canonicity without subverting the canon. A shift to weekly publication might accommodate the solicitors, but could even a big-city daily absorb the respondents?

That's not even counting the ornery respondents. Already in issue No. 2, we confront Feyerabend, who, while announcing plans to "close up shop" as a writer, responds to Toulmin's call for retractions by declaring, "I have no reason to 'take' anything back."

This is surely *malum in se*. Not only does the board plan to publish respondents who do what the board calls for, but it also plans to publish respondents who tell the board to buzz off.

Keep an eye on this journal. One way or another, it can only grow.

## FOR THE SERIOUS MULTICULTURALIST

No, don't flip to the back pages first. No personal ads. No wisteria-graced villas in Tuscany offered in exchange for a West Side sublet. But there's a silver lining. No self-corrections from befuddled professors emeriti either.

A key service of scholarly journals is providing the "different viewpoints" mass media brag about but rarely deliver. Tired of all those literary sections that honor the martyr Salman Rushdie, sympathize with the martyr Salman Rushdie, and publish the martyr Salman Rushdie's book reviews?

Welcome to **The Muslim World Book Review** (a quarterly published by the Islamic Foundation and the International Institute of Islamic Thought). Sure, it reviews some books from its own foundation and institute, along with covering intriguing topics through the books of other houses (e.g., "Critical Studies on Islamic Interest-Free Banking" in the Summer '92 issue). But no one else is doing the job.

Take the lengthy assessment by Jamil Qureshi, in the Winter '92 issue, of *Sacrilege Versus Civility: Muslim Perspectives on "The Satanic Verses" Affair* (published by the Islamic Foundation). Now there's an anthology that, one would think, some freedom-of-speech-loving U.S. publisher might want to bring out here. Qureshi suggests that the collection accomplishes tasks not even attempted by non-Muslim review media. One essay ostensibly establishes why "the novel is offensive to



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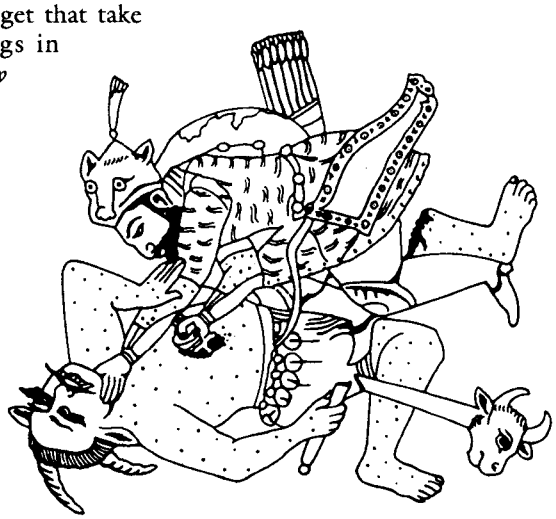
*Tired of all those literary reviews that honor the martyr Salman Rushdie?*

Muslims" and "was intended and known to be so before publication," and that "its offensiveness is gross and unjustifiable as a literary device." Another essay is described as "notable for highlighting negrophobia in the novel, for showing up the protection from offence now accorded to Jews, for its discussion of cultural treason and collective responses to it, and for its ironic list of the many assassinations and murderous interventions into the sovereignty of other nations planned or carried out by Western governments in very recent times."

Can't get that take on things in *The New York Times*. Admittedly, **The Muslim World Book Review** gets a wee predictable once you adjust your sights. Rushdie, concludes reviewer Qureshi, is "an unprincipled charlatan." A review in the same issue of Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* barely touches the book while it savages Hollywood for "promoting the image of the *Ugly Muslim* to two billion cinemagoers and TV viewers around the globe." Its sole quote from Gabler conveniently ends on the phrase, "the American dream is a Jewish invention."

But who's talking balance? In a world of spin, **The Muslim World Book Review** whirls with fresh counterspin.

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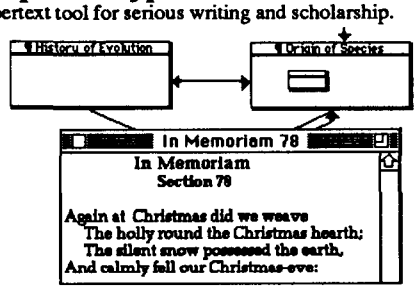
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CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

# The Killing of Professor Culianu

BY TED ANTON

*Continued from the cover*

At first, the police thought the killing might be the act of a disgruntled student or colleague, perhaps even a practitioner of the occult arts Culianu studied. But investigators turned up no evidence to corroborate these theories. What they did discover is that for almost two years, Culianu, a Romanian emigré, had been attacking the new Romanian government in journals, broadcasts, and interviews around the world. He had received death threats, as have other Romanians-in-exile since his murder.

At 41, Professor Culianu was adored by students and admired by scholars from Umberto Eco to Harold Bloom. Fluent in eight languages, the author of seventeen books, and the holder of three Ph.D.'s, Culianu was "brilliant, famous in Europe," says Dr. Moshe Idel, a Hebrew University professor and expert on Jewish mysticism. Tall, with a dimpled smile and deep eyes that looked somewhere beyond you, Ioan Culianu proposed that multiple universes coexist, that the mind creates reality, and that magic can outperform modern science. In the weeks before his murder, on May 21, 1991, he was finishing three books, planning his wedding, preparing for a long-anticipated return to Romania, and hosting a conference in Chicago with the retrospectively haunting title "Other Realms: Death, Ecstasy, and Otherworldly Journeys in Recent Scholarship."

But it is the prophetic quality of the victim's own political statements and Borgesian fiction that add the eeriest dimension to this chilling story. A specialist in the occult, Culianu liked to tell his students' futures and often came up with predictions that were unnervingly on target. At one Hyde Park party he uncovered a graduate student's concealed panic over her career; he told another that she was "humiliating herself in a love triangle" and his accuracy, she says, "knocked the wind out of me." In the fantasy and detective stories he published in avant-garde literary magazines like *Exquisite Corpse*, Culianu wrote of political events that materialized months or years later, of secret sects, and murders remarkably like his own. This crime is an academic whodunit, touching on the tortured intricacies of Romanian history, on myth and mysticism, and on the buried connections between a scholar's political and intellectual passions. As fiction, it makes uncanny tragedy. The tragedy is, it's not fiction.

As a teacher, Ioan Culianu was open, funny, and unforgettable, but as a friend he was secretive and insular. He was born January 5, 1950, into a prominent family in the Romanian town of Iasi near the Soviet border. Iasi had majestic boulevards, stone cathedrals, crooked cobbled alleys and, for Culianu, ghostly memories of his *boyar* family's former glories. Culianu's great-grandfather and grandfather had presided over its university, Romania's oldest. During



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Romania's era of fascism and Axis alliance, his grandfather was famous for defending Jews by wielding a marble-handled cane against their tormentors.

The boy grew up under the Communists, who came to power just after World War II. The party seized his family's mansion, confining them to four rooms infused by the "bitter smell of decomposing upholstery," Culianu later wrote. Forbidden to play with other children, he amused himself with solitary games in the estate's walled garden. On his office desk after the murder, police found three walnuts from the tree in that garden.

"We lived in fear of Securitate, the secret police," recalls Culianu's sister, Therese Petrescu, now married to one of Romania's leading dissidents. His father, an opposition lawyer and mathematician, could not publish or find a job; he died, a broken man, at 51.

At the University of Bucharest, Ioan Culianu and his friends reveled in mind games, teasing their professors by inventing elaborate bibliographic citations to scholars with outlandish names. When he placed first in national literature and language exams, Securitate tried to recruit him, as it did most top graduates. A so-called Captain Ureche ("Captain Ear") took him "walking through many alleyways," urging him to inform on colleagues, Culianu wrote in a 1989 statement to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. When Culianu refused, he, like his father, found he could not get a decent job or publisher.

Unlike his father, though, Ioan Culianu escaped. On July 4, 1972, he defected while in Italy on scholarship. Romanian writers abroad have been beaten or killed, in incidents that usually suggest Securitate involvement, and Culianu's subsequent achievements all came as he moved in fear of reprisal through Italy, France, and Holland. Exile, however, gave him excellent contacts around the world, especially with another Romanian expatriate, the late Mircea Eliade, the University of Chicago's acclaimed religious scholar. Eliade encouraged the younger scholar's exploration of mysticism and astral religion and helped bring Culianu to Chicago as a visiting professor in 1986. At the time of his death, Culianu held a professorship in the history of Christianity and the history of religions; the University of Chicago had promised him tenure when his immigration proceedings were concluded.

In Hyde Park, Culianu expanded his research beyond the study of religion, working to recast our concepts of magic, sex, death and the self. His interests ranged widely—from the study of multiple universes to the mind's phantasms, from literary theory to the spiritual techniques of ecstasy. "He had," says Michael Fishbane, a divinity-school colleague, "the linguistic capacity, the originality, the boldness and the energy to produce an enormous life's work." His three posthumously published books suggest the scope of his ambition. One covers the history of gnostic sects, another explores afterlife journeys, and the third is a comprehensive dictionary of world religions.

WHEN HE PLACED FIRST IN NATIONAL LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE EXAMS, SECURITATE TRIED TO RECRUIT HIM, AS IT DID MOST TOP GRADUATES.

Because he linked the occult, physics, magic, Eros and history, his scholarship was mislabeled New Age. It was far more. Culianu sought the underlying structure of fanaticism and faith to find "the patterned predictability of thought itself," writes Lawrence Sullivan, director of Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions. "He made two key contributions," says Carol Zaleski, a Smith College professor of religion. "One was in the sheer mass of his erudition. But his main interest was in understanding how the mind invents imaginary worlds and makes them so real, they in effect become real."

Yet more than his scholarship, it is his personality students still talk about. "He met us and greeted us by name," says former graduate student Michael Allocca. "I looked forward all summer to seeing him," says Greg Spinner, another of Culianu's students. "I'll just never know anyone like him again." Spinner and Allocca persuaded him to give them a course in his specialty, divination. The final exam was to predict the future.

On the university quad in 1986, Culianu met Hillary Wiesner, a Harvard graduate student with whom he would cowrite most of his later works. She became his fiancée, and the object of his mystical chivalry. "He invented a kind of religion focused on me," says Wiesner. "My friends couldn't believe him." When Culianu and Wiesner saw the movie *Cyrano de Bergerac*, though, she understood, at least a little. "He cried at that movie," she says. "In his mind he *was* Cyrano, alone, on a secret ideal quest against impossible odds to avenge his father and the past."

A willing expatriate, Ioan Culianu followed Romanian politics from a distance for seventeen years. But after the Romanian revolution in December of 1989, he became a firebrand. In his last fifteen months Culianu wrote more than thirty articles attacking Romania's new leaders in *Lumea Libera* (Free World) a New York-based émigré newspaper, and in *Corriere della Sera*, the Italian national daily. He made scathing Radio Free Europe and BBC broadcasts; the BBC even told him to tone them



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# CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

down. He wrote prescient short stories about a country called Jormania, his fictional version of Romania.

History helps explain his "latent explosion," Norman Manea's term for the belated political engagement of the Romanian intellectual in exile. Squeezed by the old Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires, Romania is a poor, mountainous, oft-conquered country haunted by identity crises and susceptible to corrupt and sadistic leadership, both foreign and native. (The most famous Romanian, Dracula, is a fictional character based on the aptly named fifteenth century prince, Vlad the Impaler.) Democratic traditions have never really taken root; xenophobia and anti-Semitism have often flourished, and as Manea points out, kept many young intellectuals aloof from national politics.

**ONE OF CULIANU'S STORIES IMAGINED A COUP IN THE MIDST OF A REVOLUTION, IN WHICH SECRET POLICE FILM EXHUMED CORPSES TO INFLATE COMBAT DEATHS.**

In the late 1930s a fascist party called the Iron Guard grew in power. Nurturing its own version of blood-and-soil mythology, the Iron Guard, in the words of the historian Vlad Georgescu, "brought a death cult to Romanian politics," and took even the Nazis aback with the barbarity of its pogroms. Aware that much of this history had been suppressed in the post-war era, Culianu had called for an investigator like Elie Wiesel to uncover the full truth of the Romanian holocaust.

In 1944 Romania's young King Michael infuriated the Iron Guard by turning his back on Germany and bringing the country into the antifascist coalition—or, as the ultranationalists saw it, capitulating to the Russians. When the Communists took over in 1947, many Iron Guardists escaped—to the United States. As it happens, Chicago harbors one of the largest concentrations of these exiles. "You have an old but active fascist community here," says a source who asked not to be named. "They still recruit," adds another.

The revolution against Nicolae Ceausescu seemed at first a joyful reversal of Romania's dark history. But a number of recent books that examine the events of December 1989, including those by NPR commentator Andrei Codrescu, journalist Edward Behr, and Radio Free Europe correspondent Nestor Ratesh, have confirmed what Culianu and others said early on about Eastern Europe's last and bloodiest revolt. They argue that what began as a genuine popular uprising in the city of Timisoara was soon co-opted by factions within Securitate, the Army, and the party that had long been planning to topple the Ceausescu regime. Accounts differ as to how quickly and definitively the revolt was hijacked. Some commentators argue that much of the revolution we saw on TV was staged and even claim that the KGB had a hand in it; others say the uprising was genuinely popular and spontaneous but soon provided a pretext for the coup plotters to make their move. All agree that many officials in the postrevolutionary government are veterans of the Ceausescu regime and share much of its contempt for democracy. As Ratesh puts it, the struggles of December resulted in "the striking paradox of a basically anti-Communist revolution producing a regime dominated by former Communists." Romania's government faces a stagnant economy and frequent protests, but the opposition is fractured, and the current regime may well be returned to power in national elections this September. An anti-Semitic right—to which some of Ceausescu's former associates have gravitated and which appears to be funded by a faction of Securitate—is on the rise.

Unlike others in Eastern Europe, the Romanian government today retains most of its secret police force (though it does have a new, more benign-sounding name: the Romanian Information Service). Even abroad, the former Securitate, or at least remnants of it, apparently continue to engage in dirty tricks. An official in the FBI's Intelligence Division testified before Congress last November, for example, that while Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary have significantly scaled back their intelligence operations in the United States, "we cannot say the same thing for Romania.... We're still very concerned about their intentions."

Ioan Culianu was among the first and loudest to label Romania's revolution a coup. His fiction had been even more perceptive: Six months before anyone thought Ceausescu could fall, Culianu published a short story in Italy, "The Intervention in Jormania," that described a rebellion similar to Romania's. A second story, "Free Jormania," told of a coup in the midst of a genuine revolution, in which secret police factions battle and coup leaders film exhumed corpses to inflate the number of combat deaths and confuse the public. An ABC *Nightline* investigation later revealed that the leaders of the Romanian revolution had resorted to just such a grisly strategy—videotaping rows of corpses dug up from paupers' graves and



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claiming they were the bodies of demonstrators killed by Ceausescu forces. In Romania as in Culianu's fiction, political reality had become a mind game.

A month before he died, a wide-ranging interview with Culianu appeared in the Romanian dissident magazine *22*. "He gave the most devastating indictment of the new union of far left and far right in Romania," says Vladimir Tismaneanu, a University of Maryland political science professor and author of *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*. At first reluctant to talk, Culianu went on to call Securitate a force "of epochal stupidity and yet unseen profundity." Asked about Romania's free elections and press, he replied that the main benefactors were newly free fascists. The professor antagonized not only far left and far right but even the interviewer, calling the revolution a "tragic waste" dictated by the KGB. "It was his death sentence," says Ion Pacepa, a former chief of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service who defected in 1978 and is now hiding in America.

It is not surprising that Ioan Culianu worried about retaliation, and thought he saw evidence of it. A month before the revolution, his Hyde Park apartment was ransacked. The Chicago police report shows that a TV, a computer, floppy disks, and bottles of wine were stolen. Culianu, who was petitioning to get his sister and brother-in-law out of the country, felt that Securitate was warning him, says his friend Stelian Plesoiu.

Others disagreed. "It was nothing political, just a bad neighborhood," says Greg Spinner, who helped his professor move out and into a high-security high rise on Lake Shore Drive.

Culianu never mentioned to university friends or the police the death threats he had begun getting. "He was a stiff-upper-lip type," says Spinner, to whom Culianu did once confide he was getting into "dangerous territory" in his political writing.

One person to whom he did mention the threats was his friend Dorin Tudoran, a dissident publisher and poet. "They came in letters or over the phone. He didn't know the source," Tudoran says. "They said they would kill him if he kept writing about Romania. First he was amused. Then he became frightened."

Yet he got himself even more involved in exile politics. In April 1991, a month before he was killed, Ioan Culianu hosted the elderly King Michael at the University of Chicago, later concluding that the exiled monarch was the best hope for stability in their country. Three days before his murder, he decided to cancel his trip to Romania, during which he had planned to visit his ailing mother and attend a conference of the American-Romanian Academy, a scholarly group known for its anti-Communist activity. He told his sister he was receiving threats from the powerful far right group called Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Hearth), "for all practical purposes an organ of the Romanian Information Service," according to a retired Securitate captain.

**"IT WAS A TYPICAL KGB-STYLE EXECUTION, ONE SHOT TO THE BACK OF THE HEAD," SAYS FORMER ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF ION PACEPA.**

He then changed the locks on his office door.

The third-floor bathroom where Ioan Culianu was slain is a serene place. Etched into one toilet roll holder is a swastika, probably unrelated to the crime. Culianu died during the lunch hour on a sunny May afternoon, as hundreds of people filed through Swift Hall for the annual divinity school book sale. His killer apparently perched on a toilet seat in the stall next to Culianu's and pointed the gun down at his head. The single shot sliced through his brain and exploded out a nostril. No one saw the killer flee. The gun was never found. Culianu's keys and wallet were still in his pocket and his black opal watch was still fastened to his wrist. The killing was so precise that when a student entered the bathroom minutes later, there was almost no blood yet, just a bluish arm dangling below the partition.

"These people knew what they were doing," observes Cook County Chief Medical Examiner Robert J. Stein. "To kill with one shot from a gun as small as a .25—that's not easy." The former intelligence chief Ion Pacepa goes further: "It's a typical KGB-style type of execution, one shot to the back of the head."

Culianu's killing uncoiled a string of strange events, rumors, and instances of disinformation. A day after the murder a gift of his books that Culianu had sent to King Michael's home in Geneva, Switzerland, arrived in its Jiffy Pak envelope—opened and empty. The day before the murder, someone phoned the family and many of the business associates of Andrei Codrescu to tell them that Codrescu, a Romanian exile and a friend of Culianu's, had killed himself. Codrescu says he eventually learned that the calls had been made by "an individual in California." But he says that he is afraid to reveal the caller's identity, commenting only that "the spread of disinformation is a typical Securitate strategy."

In the following days the widow of Mircea Eliade, a woman Culianu doted on, began receiving menacing calls at her Hyde Park home. Eliade had named Culianu his literary executor, but in recent years the elder scholar, who died in 1986, had come under attack as an apologist for the Iron Guard and Culianu



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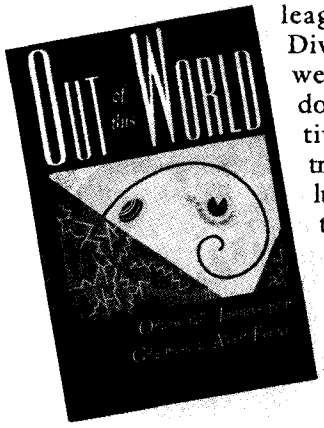
# MIND GAMES: A GUIDE TO THE SCHOLARSHIP OF IOAN CULIANU

All systems are infinite and tend to explore all possibilities given to them," wrote Ioan Culianu. It's a sentence characteristic of Culianu's work, and a telling self-description of a scholar who thought of the human mind as one such infinite system, capable of conjuring up other worlds.

Culianu wrote in six languages and spoke eight. He held three doctorates; his specialty at the University of Chicago Divinity School was the history of religions, but one of the first courses he offered there was "Renaissance Magic for Beginners." His editor at the University of Chicago Press, David Brent, recalls that Culianu was just getting interested in ethnomusicology: "He was curious about the connections between music and healing, music and magic, musically induced states of ecstasy." He wrote short stories, and was showing publishers a novel he'd written with his fiancée, Hillary Wiesner. At the time of his death, Culianu had just proposed two new projects: a three-part history of the mind with volumes on religion, philosophy, and science; and a history of magic. He was grappling after a theory that would not only explain past patterns of thought, but help predict future ones as well, and was looking to science for models, hoping to incorporate chaos theory, fractals, and Einsteinian physics into the study of history and religion. Where most of Culianu's colleagues at the Divinity School were either doing comparative work or tracing the evolution of a particular religious tradition, Culianu was working on both: the systems he proposed made him something like a comparative encyclopedist.




Culianu began writing *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), his first book to be translated into English, in 1969 when he was nineteen and still living in Bucharest. Mircea Eliade wrote the foreword to it. Eliade, too, had had a "youthful passion" for the Italian Renaissance—and it was probably after Eliade as much as after Ficino or Bruno that Culianu modelled his scholarly ideal of the Renaissance man. In American universities, the notion might be verging on obsolete, but in Romania it was technically impossible. By the time Culianu left his native country in 1972, the Ceausescu government had declared its hostility to most areas of academic research, including quantum physics, which it had "outlawed" as one of the many subjects Mrs. Ceausescu did not understand.

"Thought depends on the freedom of individuals to sit down and think," his graduate assistant Nathaniel Deutsch remembers Culianu saying. The Renaissance, Culianu believed, was the perfect example of how an increase in freedom produced new ideas. Because Culianu wanted to account for the proliferation of identical ideas, throughout Europe and eventually throughout history, his comparative method looks for cross-cultural convergences.

Of his last published books, *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (Shambhala, 1991) most clearly illustrates that method, and its shortcomings. The book is a catalog of various routes—shamanistic ritual, dreams, fourth-dimension theories, ecstatic trances, visionary literature—to worlds beyond conventional perception. Culianu wants to establish the common ground of these other worlds, but there's a lot of it to cover between Gilgamesh and Einstein. Although he wanted a larger audience for his work, and much of the vaguely New Age subject matter here—altered states of consciousness, out-of-body and near-death experiences—indicate as much, his cursory treatment of more esoteric material like neoplatonism, Renaissance magic, and Jewish messianism are likely to leave the uninitiated baffled, and the specialist wanting more.

*The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (HarperCollins, 1992) is probably Culianu's most ambitious scholarly work. A survey of Gnosticisms from Valentinus to Nietzsche, it emphasizes the dualistic contrasts—between good and evil, spiritual and material—that all these varieties of the doctrine have in common. Serious students of Gnosticism will find the book useful, but its real value is as an experiment in method. In it, Culianu introduces his own concept of "morphodynamics," which he thought represented an advance over the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, whom he admired but faulted for neglecting the workings of history. As Culianu knew all too well, the sovereignty of a particular idea—the triumph, for example, of "mainstream" or "normative" Christianity at gnosticism's expense—frequently depends more on who holds power than on the idea's logical coherence.

With Ioan Culianu dead, and at least another lifetime's worth of his work to be done, who will pick it up? Perhaps one of the students he influenced during his brief stay at Chicago. But, as Lawrence Sullivan points out, if Culianu was right, and the same ideas *do* occur around the world at the same time, Culianu not only predicted his death, he foretold his legacy as well.

*—Lee Smith*



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himself had criticized his mentor. Mrs. Eliade changed her number and has declined to talk.

A few weeks later, the American-Romanian Academy meeting in Bucharest fizzled when a number of scholars from the West who'd been scheduled to attend bowed out. "It was crucial for free opposition in our country," says Mircea Sabau, a physicist at the University of Chicago's teaching hospital and a friend of Culianu's. "But after the killing, few people showed up."

According to Culianu's sister, Romania's official newspaper, *Libertatea* (Freedom), then published what it claimed was a Chicago police report asserting that no foreign intelligence service was involved in the crime. But the Chicago police say they issued no such report. In a June 7, 1991 press conference Romania's President Ion Iliescu also commented on the crime, stating a "high American official" told him it was not a political murder. A State Department expert on Eastern European affairs, however, disclaims any knowledge of such a comment by an American official.

Other Romanian writers in the U.S. and abroad began getting death threats. The far rightist newspaper *Romania Mare* (Greater Romania), published by former Ceausescu supporters, attacked political science professor Vladimir Tismaneanu: "Watch out rat, the rat patrol is after you." In Washington, dissident Dorin Tudoran began receiving threats naming Culianu. "I got calls that said, 'We'll send you after your friend Culianu. We have a bullet with your name on it.'" The FBI eventually caught the Romanians making the calls, but neither Tudoran nor the bureau will say who they were.

In Athens, a Romanian writer and close friend of Professor Culianu was threatened twice during the week his article on the murder appeared. In New York, a journalist received threats similar to the others. In Chicago, a Romanian radio announcer who has sponsored the king's visits got menacing phone calls and a letter naming Culianu.

Some of the threats may be spurious, traceable to a lone exile nursing old resentments. But there is something odd, and perhaps significant, about the way most of these messages are worded: They borrow the archaic language of the Iron Guard's mystic nationalism. In Athens the letters even featured obsolete accent marks. Most observers say this is an old Securitate cover tactic. In his book *Red Horizons*, Ion Pacepa details international smear campaigns in which the Securitate used nationalist rhetoric to intimidate dissidents, sometimes inventing new right-wing groups.

A February 1992 article in *Romania Mare* adopted similar language to applaud Culianu's murder. Filled with vulgar references to the murder site, the article said Culianu was appropriately killed on a "lethal toilet prepared for him as if by destiny."

A murder site is a text, and on a quiet May afternoon divinity school professor Anthony Yu analyzes the bathroom site of his friend's murder, close to his book-lined office. "It's ritually significant," he says. "It conveys symbolic and physical humiliation, stain, impurity, a most profane site to end a life. In fact, I've wondered if this was a cult killing."

The police haven't ruled out the possibility that it was a cult killing—or the act of a disgruntled colleague, student, or lover. But if there is such a motive, it is well hidden. "He just didn't have any enemies," says Nathaniel Deutsch, Culianu's graduate assistant, and others concur.

On occasion, though, Culianu's avid research into the occult had gotten him into trouble. At a lecture he gave in France on Renaissance magic, three self-described witches objected to his meddling in their realm. He, his co-lecturer, and several in the audience became seriously ill. Lectures on that topic were "an enterprise," he noted wryly in his book *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, "from which I shall refrain in the future."

Many Romanians themselves are skeptical about a political motive in this murder. Why would even an unbridled faction of the Securitate bother with a professor in Chicago who was not a player? The question is a cultural knot; its answer may lie less in the rational than in the mythical, indeed cultist, fanaticism Culianu studied and critiqued.

First, discard the idea that a professor's writings could not inspire enough anger to get him killed. Many compare Culianu's death to the 1940 murder of Nicholae Iorga, a famous Romanian historian who had antagonized the Iron Guard and is thought to have been killed by them, outside of Bucharest. "I know the people who murdered Iorga," says Dr. Alexander Ronnett, an elderly dentist and general practitioner who is a self-proclaimed Chicago spokesman for the Iron Guard. "The only thing they did wrong was to be too kind," he says. "They should have skinned him alive in public."

To Romania's new far rightists, Culianu was a traitor to his kind—a writer whose attacks were more direct and personal than those of people like Tismaneanu, Codrescu or Manea, who are all Jewish and therefore excluded, in the neofascist view of things, from the circle of Romanian patriots. He was the intellectual heir to Eliade, one of Romania's most famous scholars abroad. But while the old Iron Guard had proudly called Eliade "one of our own," the new Romanian rightists loathed Culianu. The article in *Romania Mare*, signed by Leonard Gavriliu, the Romanian translator of Freud, offered its own harrowing commentary on the murder site: referring to the "seething, fermented vision of Culianu's fecal



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## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

brain," it called him "a piece of excrement over whom not enough water was flushed." It said that Culianu, "a refugee in the gangster megalopolis of Chicago," had no right to criticize Romanian anti-semitism or to demand a reckoning with the country's recent past.

Securitate, too, reserves special vengeance for anyone who puts their criticisms of Romania in writing. In 1991 Dimitru Mazilu, a former high official of the ruling National Salvation Front who had just completed a manuscript critical of the new regime, was beaten and slashed in his Geneva apartment. The two hooded men who attacked him with razors spoke Romanian—and they left with Mazilu's manuscript. Other writers and publishers have been beaten or killed in France, Germany, and Canada. According to Ion Pacepa, the Ceausescu-era Securitate used radiation to surreptitiously poison dissident writers it had detained.

Still, even those who are convinced that Culianu's was a political murder are puzzled about why he in particular might have been targeted. One explanation

**"HIS CRITICISM WAS COMPLEX, NONLINEAR, SUBTLE. YOU MUST PUT IT TOGETHER. THEN IT'S DEVASTATING."**

may be the breadth and passion of Culianu's attack on Romania's new government. Appearing in April 1991, a month before he died, Culianu's interview with *22* was one of the first broadsides on the ruling National Salvation Front and the December revolution to be published in Romania itself. In it, he "combined the emotionalism of a poet with the depth of a political scientist," says Vladimir Tismaneanu. He castigated not only Securitate but the Iron Guard, cultist nationalism, the Orthodox Church, and Romanian culture. He called for investigation of Romania's genocide of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Any one of these could provoke reprisal in a country that has never confronted its recent past. "His criticism was complex, nonlinear, subtle. You must put it together," says Mircea Sabau. "Then, it's devastating."

The *22* interview would have "hit them [the current Romanian government] hard," says Ion Pacepa. "They'd say, 'This guy's trouble. He's only going to get worse. Let's get rid of him.' It may not even have been a government decision."

The fact that Culianu was not known outside the academic world may also have made him more vulnerable. "They go after those less well-known to confuse the police and scare the rest of us," says Sabau.

When it comes to Balkan intrigue, the Chicago police proceed pretty much as usual. "The FBI handles the international dimension," says Chicago Police Commander Fredrick Miller, who will say only that he's recently gotten a new lead in the Culianu case.

The enigmatic killing grips those who knew Ioan Culianu. "Losing him was like the burning of the Library at Alexandria. There's so much he knew, it'll take years to sift what he could tell you in a second," says Greg Spinner. "I can't stop thinking about him," says Nathaniel Deutsch. Beyond the senseless loss, the correlation between his research and his murder is the most unsettling element of this crime. Ioan Culianu believed in multiple universes—perhaps because he lived in multiple worlds himself. He taught his students to suspend disbelief to become good detectives of the occult; he believed Eastern Europeans had to do the same in order to uncover the occult political twists of a deeply divided region. He believed in the power of the past and the power to rewrite it, as he saw such power used in his country. "His scholarly interests were almost a mirror image of the organization that was plotting to kill him," says his friend Vladimir Tismaneanu.

Culianu's last short story, "The Language of Creation," appeared in Andrei Codrescu's magazine *Exquisite Corpse* the month Culianu died. It tells of a historian "forty years old, living in a high rise security building on the Lake." He teaches at a "grey and renowned Midwestern University." And one day he comes to possess a strange music box that contains in code the language spoken by God: the Language of Creation. The three former owners of the box have met with murder in centuries past.

The current owner considers using the box against a "distasteful political regime" but fears he will suffer the same fate as those who came before him. As much as he tries to break its secret code, he never can. After much indecision he finally leaves the music box at a yard sale and escapes to freedom from what had become the intellectual prison posed by its secret.

After twenty years of exile, with all those accomplishments behind him, and so many ahead of him, one wonders why Ioan Culianu didn't leave his own past at a yard sale. Did he sense the full extent of the danger he was in? At times it almost seems he did. If one looks deep enough into the story of his murder, one may see a professor unconsciously grappling in his fiction and scholarship with the very real forces that combined to kill him.

*Ted Anton teaches in the Master of Arts writing program at De Paul University. He recently received a grant to investigate the Culianu case in Romania.*



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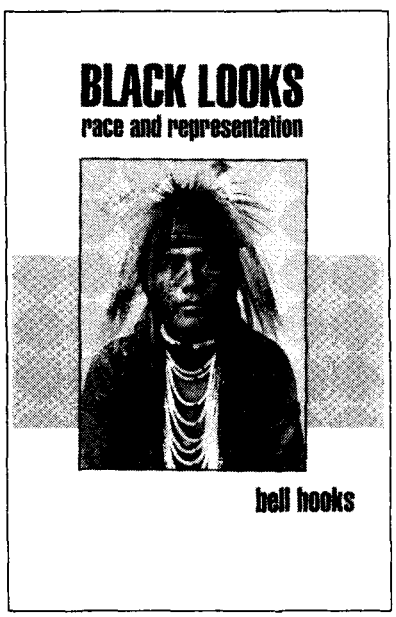


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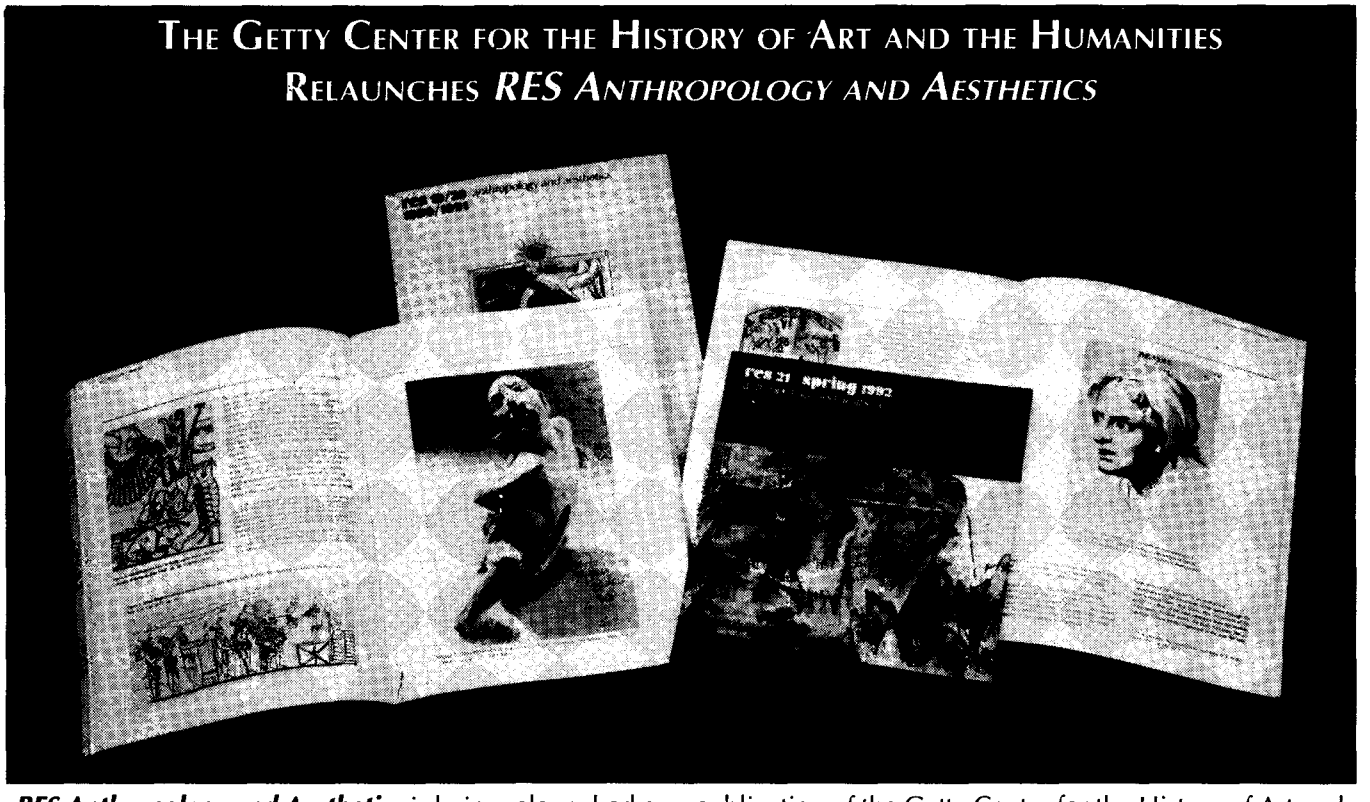

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FEATURE

# heavenly DECEPTION

BY CHRIS BRYSON

## THE REVEREND MOON'S POLITE PURCHASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT

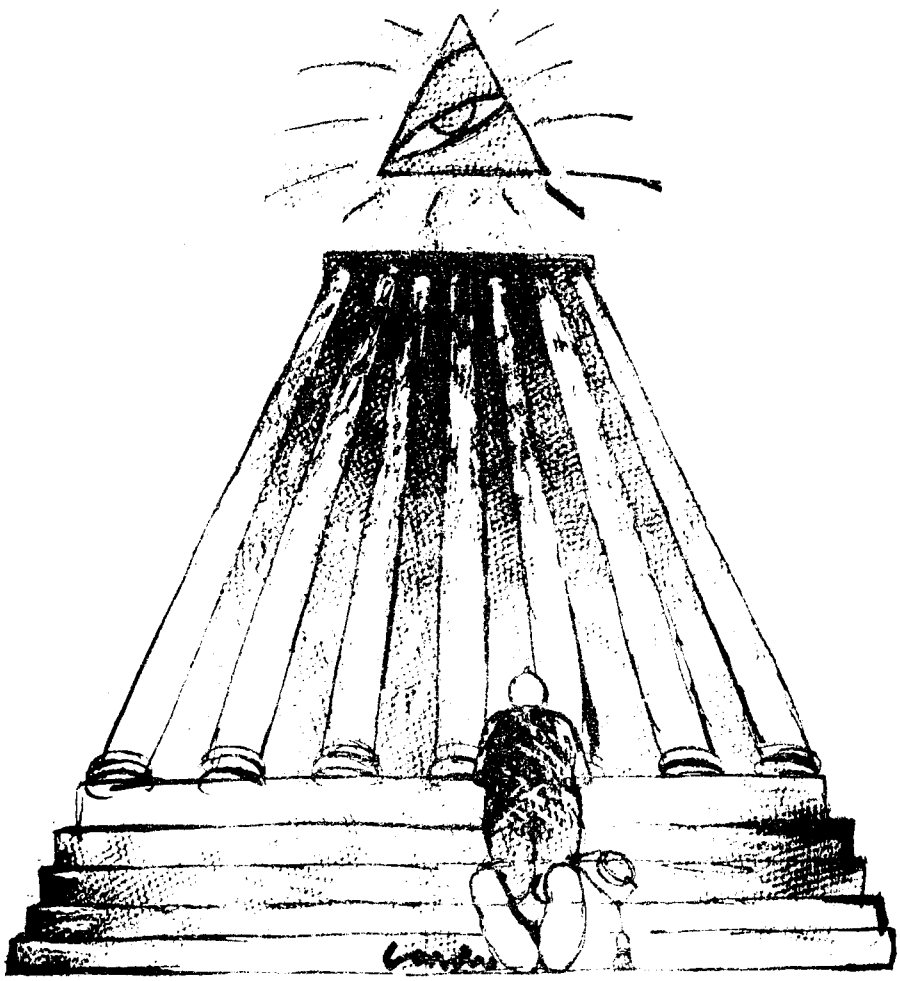

ILLUSTRATION BY HORACIO CARDO

Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education Andrew G. De Rocco had a nightmare one night last April. Earlier that month, he had learned that the trustees of the University of Bridgeport had voted to accept $50.5 million from the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA)—an academic affiliate of the Unification Church, headed by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. In return, the trustees of the broke, strike-ridden, and bad-press-plagued university were handing over to the PWPA control of their board, a de facto veto over the budget and the choice of top officials, and the right to create special church-funded programs and house them on campus. But what was *really* cutting into De Rocco's good night's sleep was the fact that, as commissioner, it is De Rocco himself who will have the deeply unpleasant task of recommending whether or not the state should accredit America's very first Moonie U.

De Rocco dreamed he was in a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip, and he and Calvin had just jumped into a time machine and been transported back 500 years to Spain at the time of the Inquisition. He was still Commissioner of Higher Education, but he had a different decision to make. This time, he says, "I had to certify head inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada for ownership of the University of Seville."

Commissioner De Rocco's peace of mind is not the only thing that's been upset by the prospect of Moon's professorial cohorts running the University of Bridgeport. Ever since the news broke last September that UB was being wooed by an affiliate of a group synonymous in many Americans' minds with glassy-eyed dropouts pin-



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# *heavenly* DECEPTION

ning flowers to travelers in airports, many people have been feeling, well, concerned. Acrimony over the money the PWPA temptingly if somewhat elusively held aloft—it was not, it turned out, a flat payment but loans made against university property and tuition for PWPA-recruited students—has already led to the flight of students and faculty (including three department heads who quit in July), the resignation of UB's president, and most of all, rampant conspiracy theorizing.

But does the bailout really bode ill for the University of Bridgeport? Absolutely not, the agreement's advocates reply. They argue that the PWPA will save the 65-year-old private school from closing and bring an urgently needed infusion of international students and cash to Bridgeport's dilapidated South End. The PWPA, they continue, is a thoroughly level-headed organization, with 800 members at U.S. universities and 100 chapters worldwide; the countless conferences it has sponsored on subjects like child education, Third World development, foreign policy, and ethnic conflict attract respected scholars, even Nobel Prize winners. The Unification Church's relationship to UB will be sober and responsible, little different from, say, that of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to Brigham Young University. "The Unification Church seems to me to be at this point an evolved cult turning into a respectable religion," says UB creative writing professor Richard Allen, in whose office a threadbare carpet bears testimony to UB's desperate need. "We are not facing images of people grabbing people off street corners. That is an image that comes out of the crazy sixties."

Skeptics, on the other hand, point to a pledge signed by PWPA's founding members promising to "work with the Reverend Moon towards the establishment of a God-centered world." They say the group will use the school to whitewash both the church and Moon, a convicted felon who served time in nearby Danbury Federal Correctional Facility for tax evasion, whose close ties to the Korean Central Intelligence Agency figured prominently in Congress's "Koreagate" hearings in the late 1970s, and who was a key figure in the World Anti-Communist League, among other extreme right-wing groups.

One longtime Moon researcher argues that UB will be the jewel in Moon's crown—an irresistible draw for young foreign students eager to study at an American university and not too worried about what happens when they get there. He says the school will soon lay the groundwork for an international expansion of Moon's businesses by pumping its well-groomed, ecumenically correct graduates directly into Moon-owned companies—his newspapers and video production company in the United States, perhaps, or his arms manufacturing concern in Korea. Even worse, Bridgeport residents complain, it might send these graduates out into the community. The university, after all, trains teachers who go out and work in Bridgeport schools; it also houses a city-run police training academy. "It blows my mind that a group with so many right-wing and paramilitary connections would have access to the local police," says Bridgeport alderman Bill Finch.

> THE SCHOOL MAY SOON BE PUMPING ITS WELL-GROOMED, ECUMENICALLY CORRECT GRADUATES DIRECTLY INTO MOON-OWNED BUSINESSES.

"It's very clear that UB will be nothing more than an arm of the church," concludes Donna Wagner, a former professor of gerontology at UB, president of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, and an active member of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens, a group formed to fight the takeover.

Now De Rocco, who clearly agonizes over whether Wagner is right, has to figure out what he can do about it, and he must do so by October. That's when a team from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the state Department of Higher Education will visit Bridgeport to examine the PWPA's plans for managing the university and its finances. After reviewing the team's report, De Rocco must decide whether to recommend reaccreditation. The UB charter calls for the school to remain "non-sectarian" and "undenominational," but, as lawyers consulted by the trustees have pointed out, those terms generally mean only "absence of restriction to a particular religious group or discipline." In the past, the Supreme Court has given schools the right not just to accreditation but to public funds if they follow "a well-established set of principles of academic freedom" and if "religious indoctrination is not a substantial purpose or activity" of the school. These phrases, of course, give the state considerable leeway. Will De Rocco be allowed to consider Moon's history? His stated goal of converting the world to his theocracy? His dogma of "heavenly deception"—that is, lying to the unconverted if that's what it takes to do God's work? The mystery of Moon's seemingly bottomless pockets? The source of his funding is murky, but Moon is reportedly linked not only to the KCIA but to the Japanese organized crime syndicate, the *yakuza*. As Charles M. Cook, director of NEASC's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, puts it, "If John Gotti wanted to give money to a college, it would be an interesting issue."

The most vexing question of all probably also lies beyond the purview of De Rocco and the accreditors: Isn't giving the reins of a university to a church often attacked for brainwashing college students—UB's own Office of Student Life once warned "tired, anxious...and perhaps uncertain" students to stay away from the Moonies' Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, or CARP—like, kind of dumb?

Ever since the details of the agreement were released to the press in July by the Coalition of Concerned Citizens, however, the question that has been preoccupying Bridgeport residents and university faculty is: Was this actually a bailout or an outright buyout? In other words, did the trustees really give the *whole* store away?

Wagner's group certainly thinks so. In a fifteen-page analysis of the agreement,



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the coalition states flatly, "The Agreement surrenders total control of the University of Bridgeport to the PWPA."

But Edwin Eigel Jr., UB's current president, downplays the threat. "These people [the PWPA] are serious in their plans. They are not stupid. They are not going to do anything to screw things up."

The group's defenders cite as safeguards a clause swearing no "ideological, religious, gender-related, ethnic or other prerequisites or limitations for students, faculty, administrators or trustees" and a clause that holds UB to the boilerplate text on academic freedom, issued in 1940 by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges.

But the provisions of the agreement that critics object to make a much longer list. It includes:

■ A one-seat majority on the board of trustees, which elects its own chairman and picks presidents, among other things. One of the sixteen people the PWPA named to the board this August is Neil Salonen. Currently the head of the church's International Cultural Foundation, Salonen has served, at various times, as president of the Unification Church in the United States (he held this position during the heyday of the Moonies' grab-'em-off-the-street-and-send-'em-out-begging days); head of the Freedom Leadership Foundation, a political group (his main task was trying to gather support for Nixon during Watergate); and director of Tong Il Enterprises, Moon's gun parts company.

The new trustees also include ex-congressman Richard Ichord, who headed the House UnAmerican Activities Committee in its final days; former Costa Rican president Rodrigo Carazo Odio, notorious for having jacked up that country's foreign debt by 275 percent and "widely perceived," as *The New York Times* once put it, "to have been the worst leader in recent history"; and Phillip Sanchez, publisher of two Moon-owned newspapers (one of which has closed) and a man who once used his connections to help wangle an invitation to the White House for the head of Wedtech, while that company was under federal investigation.

■ The financial arrangements. Although the PWPA may have rescued UB in the short term, in the long run it may not be doing the university any favors. As collateral for the $50.5 million, which comes in installments as a loan for eight years and then reverts to a grant, the PWPA retains a claim against university land and buildings. Should the school fail to comply with anything in the agreement, it will have to pay back the money; should it fail to do so, the PWPA can seize its property.

Even that $50.5 million bailout figure is likely to shrink. According to the agreement, the PWPA may subtract from that amount the tuition it pays for students it recruits. Most of those will probably be foreign—a PWPA "Statement of Objectives" pegged "the Soviet Union and ... the Far East" as recruitment arenas. Moon met with Gorbachev in April 1990; now an estimated 20,000 Russian teachers and high school students are attending church-sponsored lectures or workshops, while thousands of students have visited the U.S. for ten-day all-expenses-paid Moon-sponsored trips, which included jaunts to Bridgeport. The coalition argues that students coming from overseas will probably have to undergo church training in exchange for their scholarships.

And some people are questioning whether the Moon organization can actually pony up the money it has promised to pay. "Many of Moon's businesses are disasters," former church consultant Richard Quebedeaux told *Lingua Franca*.

The church's economic interests extend to some 800 businesses worldwide with a value of some $10 billion. But recent news reports reveal a record of bad management and huge losses. A multimillion-dollar Moon car plant in China has been stalled for lack of funds, and two of Moon's other schools, his Korean university and his seminary in New York State, are in financial straits. Internal sources say the church may owe as much as $12 billion to Japanese banks and "wealthy individuals."

■ A clause that gives the PWPA the right to found special programs "uniquely related to the objectives of PWPA"—that is, of course, "the establishment of a God-centered world." These programs will be funded by the PWPA, staffed by faculty picked by the PWPA, and held on campus.

Spend a little time on the deserted UB campus now and you'll find evidence of a lingering bitterness. Trustees have accused one another of brainwashing, being brainwashed, and of deliberately driving the university into the arms of the Moonies; students just want to grab their degrees and get out. One graduating senior told a *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter last spring that he hoped the school would change its name—"Whatever they call it, I don't care, as long as I'm not associated with it." Another, interviewed in Frederick Law Olmstead's elegant Seaside Park alongside the UB campus, expressed the flip unconcern of the deeply cynical: "Let them buy the school. Everyone else is buying up the States, so why not them?"

Then again, life at UB has been bitter for a long time now. Over the past two decades or so, a combination of regional decay and administrative mismanagement have systematically stripped a once fashionable neighborhood and its perfectly good university of both appeal and honor. When the arms manufacturers and steel mills that dominated local industry left town, they left the handsome 84-acre campus overlooking Long Island Sound to hold up the city's South End. But in the early 1980s, the university began spending more than it earned, in part to fund ambitious expansion plans. To pick up some extra cash, the school raised tuition and board to $18,000, effectively pricing itself out of its market. According to law school officials, the university began siphoning off large chunks of money from the law school, its most lucrative program, prompting complaints from the American Bar Association and the American Association of Law Schools and a threatened withdrawal of the school's accreditation. University enrollment sank from a high of 9,100 in the late sixties to around 2,500 last year. The administration estimates that about 1,300 students will enroll this fall.

Then there were the faculty strikes, four since 1974. The latest, which began in 1990 and has continued through this summer, has been the longest in the history of American universities, and one of the ugliest. It was sparked when the school declared a financial emergency, the layoff of one quarter of all employees, and pay cuts



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# *heavenly* DECEPTION

for the rest. The university ultimately hired scab professors, some of whom lacked the requisite degrees or, in one case, allegedly lied about having a Yale Ph.D.

The upshot of all this is that the university now owes $26.9 million to local banks and suppliers. Last spring the law school sold itself off to a rival school, Quinnipiac College in nearby Hamden. The university's accreditors have put it on probation. The board, which admitted in court in 1991 that it illegally spent $700,000 in endowment funds, finally got permission to dip into those funds, which amount to less than $10 million. Its members, meanwhile, consulted a New York law firm about whether they could be held liable for the school's woes. All things being equal, the school would probably have run out of money and closed at the end of spring semester.

Instead, the PWPA, having seen its first offer turned down at one board meeting and having been invited to resubmit its offer by a local business leader, bailed out the school. If UB wins accreditation, starting next fall, the PWPA will run it.

The tale of how the PWPA wooed UB is fairly muddled; most people dispute who knew what when, and everyone would like to know why they didn't know more earlier. What is clear is that the PWPA followed a strategy reminiscent of Moonie recruitment on campuses and city streets: selectively withholding information about an organization's status as a Moon front group.

Former UB president Janet Greenwood says she was approached by a PWPA member, Bard College religion professor Anthony Guerra, in August 1990. According to Greenwood, Guerra at first said only that he represented wealthy overseas investors with "an interest in international education." It was not until February 1991, she says, that he told her the PWPA was backed by Moon. (Guerra would not speak to *Lingua Franca* for this article.)

In turn, Greenwood told some trustees and kept the information from others. It was not until a month later, early one morning at New York's La Guardia airport, where several trustees were gathered and about to board a plane for Washington and the offices of a potential "Japanese investor," that Anthony Guerra finally came clean: What they would actually be visiting were Moon-owned facilities. These included the *Washington Times* and Moon's new Atlantic Video TV production studios. "I think I would have told them earlier," says former trustee Newman Marsilius, who'd ridden down from Connecticut with Greenwood and the rest of the Washington-bound party. "Maybe she was afraid nobody would go." Greenwood says that while she did not inform all the trustees invited on that Washington field trip that the PWPA was affiliated with the Unification Church, nevertheless, "they should have known."

> TO WOO BRIDGEPORT, THE PWPA FOLLOWED A STRATEGY REMINISCENT OF MOONIE RECRUITMENT ON CAMPUSES AND CITY STREETS.

Other trustees, such as Ruth Steinkraus Cohen, did not learn of the PWPA's Moon connections until September 1991, around the same time that the story broke in the local press. Then, on October 3, Steinkraus Cohen recalls, there was a "secretive, clandestine" meeting in the basement of Greenwood's residence, in which trustees were given one of the PWPA's glossy promotional brochures—which they had to return to Greenwood before leaving.

The vote was scheduled for a trustees' meeting on October 21. Two days before the meeting, the university held what was billed as a public forum. The PWPA showed up with a daunting arsenal of speakers: Ichord, Carazo Odio, Sanchez, and Morton Kaplan, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, the editor of a Moon-owned glossy magazine, *The World & I*, and now also a UB trustee.

Two people from the Cult Awareness Network, a Chicago group that works with former cult members, also showed up but were not allowed to speak and were thrown out of the building. Still, the trustees, perhaps alarmed at how fast things were moving, voted the offer down, pledging to seek other avenues of escape.

But those routes soon dead-ended. UB tried to give itself away to the University of Connecticut, but the state of Connecticut didn't want it. Next it tried Sacred Heart University in nearby Fairfield, but Sacred Heart couldn't shoulder UB's heavy debt burden. Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, the University of New Haven, and Bridgeport Engineering Institute all made bids for various pieces of the university, but these were rejected. Greenwood resigned, but before she did so, she suggested that the university issue bonds. The state refused to guarantee them.

Meanwhile, the trustees, most of them business people from the community, were under heavy pressure from UB's local creditors to approve the deal with the Moonies. Steinkraus Cohen believes that the trustees reviewed each offer perfunctorily; she says Greenwood and board chairman Colin Gunn refused to allow the others to take proposals home to study them carefully. The last straw may have been the advice the trustees got from a New York law firm, which told them that, in the absence of other options, they had no choice but to accept the PWPA's offer.

"We have a vision of a university network which would first put one school on each continent and then expand to maybe seventy countries or maybe 120 in the distant future," says Gordon L. Anderson, the PWPA's secretary general. He is sitting in the Unification Church's plush U.S. headquarters in Manhattan beneath a large portait of a beaming Reverend Moon, who he freely acknowledges masterminded the takeover plan.

That vision is already on its way to being realized. The church owns several schools throughout the world, including the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York, and the new Sonhwa University in South Korea. If local accreditation hurdles are surmounted in Connecticut, Anderson says, UB will become a "flagship" university in a global network of Moon-affiliated schools.



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According to Anderson, the PWPA has been looking to buy a secular American university for three years now; church documents underline its strategic importance for Moon. A November 1990 list called "Father's Instructions," for example, outlines nine tasks for the church to undertake in the U.S. Number eight is "preparation to undertake university ownership." Also included in this motley assortment of instructions from Moon are preparation for "revivals on campus" and for infiltration of the American fish, jewelry, and video and electronic media markets.

According to the PWPA "Statement of Objectives," part of Bridgeport's appeal was its proximity to New York City. Another factor included "its highly developed cooperative education program which would allow foreign as well as domestic students to gain valuable work experience...and to defray their tuition expenses."

Still another draw may have been a geographic fluke: Bridgeport's proximity to a waterfront. City officials told *Lingua Franca* that the PWPA has been exhibiting unusual signs of interest in the city's plan to create a new Port Authority. A university lawyer recently telephoned the Bridgeport harbormaster, saying he was acting on the PWPA's behalf and wanting to find out more about the waterfront. Salonen himself showed up at an aldermanic meeting at which new Port Authority ordinances were discussed.

Why this fascination with the harbor? Well, the church owns a fishing fleet and other businesses in the seaside town of Gloucester, Mass. And a recent article in the *Fairfield County Advocate*, a Connecticut weekly, explores Moon's theological obsession with the ocean: In a series of speeches he made in the late 1970s collected in a volume called *The Ocean Church*, Moon lays out a convoluted plan to inflate the price of tuna caught on the East Coast and sold in Asia. The church often sends members to Gloucester to toil on tuna-fishing boats; the *Advocate* recounts the tale of two Japanese parents who found their college dropout son—a recent convert to the cult—working twenty-hour days on a Moon-owned Gloucester fishing boat.

Alderman Bill Finch, however, suspects an even more ominous scenario. He speculates that the PWPA is targeting the waterfront at the behest of another figure who has been linked to Moon since his early days—Ryoichi Sasakawa, a billionaire who made his money through gambling on speedboat racing, heads a shipbuilder's organization, and allegedly has ties to the Japanese *yakuza*. Rumors about Sasakawa's interest in Bridgeport have been rampant but never proven. According to Greenwood, Guerra early on told her that interest in UB came from three of the original members of the Japanese Unification Church, one of whom "was in the boat-building industry," she says. PWPA officials, however, deny Sasakawa was involved in the UB offer. If he did turn out to be involved, Sasakawa could certainly give opponents of the UB bailout more fuel for their fire. A militant fascist, he led troops into China during World War II. After the war, he was imprisoned as a Class-A war criminal but abruptly released without a trial. Having made his fortune, Sasakawa has become a con-


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## heavenly DECEPTION

troversial figure on the American academic scene. His proffered donations of $1 million and more have been rejected by several universities dubious of the money's origins, though others, including Yale, Princeton, and Columbia Universities, have taken the gifts.

Moon's ardent involvement in Latin American politics has also upset some Bridgeport residents. What worries local activist Cesar Batalla, head of Bridgeport's Puerto Rican Coalition, for example, is the Moon campus group CARP's history of monitoring student opposition to U.S. involvement in Central America and filing scores of reports to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the early 1980s. Then there's CAUSA, a Moon organization which reportedly funnels money to Latin American right-wing extremist groups—death squads in Honduras, for example, and the officers who organized the 1980 putsch in Bolivia, which replaced a democratic government with a military junta. (According to German press reports, a top Moon official worked with Klaus Barbie on the coup.)

But perhaps the paramount worry for critics of the Bridgeport deal is how well the church can live up to its assurances that it will not interfere in the classroom. They point to Moon's broken promises of editorial freedom at the *Washington Times*. Senior editors William Cheshire and James Whelan resigned from the *Times* in the mid-1980s, charging repeated and serious interference. According to Cheshire, the *Times* staff was forced to doctor copy on wire-service stories about Moon and South Korea. "If I were a member of the staff or faculty at Bridgeport, I would be very much concerned that the Unification Church will subtly or not so subtly begin to exert its authority over the operation of the school, the employment of faculty, and perhaps the curriculum," says Cheshire.

And at Moon's New York publishing company, Paragon House, one former editor-in-chief, Ken Stuart, says the company often ignored its own pledges of editorial autonomy. Stuart quit because his rejections of manuscripts were regularly overturned by higher-ups. Paragon, says Stuart, "wants an instant major university press but is doing it with second- or third-rate stuff. They like pulling professors into their orbit and rubbing bellies with them. It's their way of gaining legitimacy."

In this era of university downsizing, the story of the University of Bridgeport is perhaps a cautionary one, an example of what can happen to a school and a neighborhood abandoned to their own poverty. Last year, Bridgeport became the biggest city in America to declare bankruptcy; now it is getting a quick shot in the arm. But at what price? And will the people who helped the deal along be around to help the community deal with the consequences? Cesar Batalla certainly doesn't think so. "We are a poor community," he says. "We are very vulnerable. That's why people are looking the other way."

*Chris Bryson, a freelance writer in New York, has reported on the University of Bridgeport for the BBC.*


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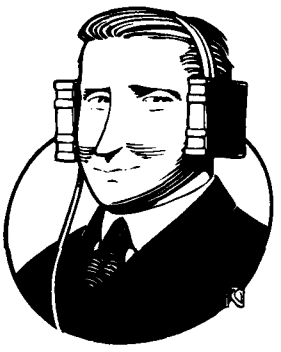

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ESSAY

# *disliking* BOOKS *at an early age*

BY GERALD GRAFF

*Gerald Graff's new book,* Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education, *due out from W.W. Norton next month, takes a novel approach to the canon debates: Graff says professors need to "teach the conflicts"—to make curricular battles themselves a subject of study. In the chapter from which this excerpt is taken, Graff, a professor of English at the University of Chicago and a founder of Teachers for a Democratic Culture, makes the counter-intuitive claim that it is often debates over books—not the books themselves—that make passionate critics out of reluctant readers.*

I like to think I have a certain advantage as a teacher of literature because when I was growing up I disliked and feared books. My youthful aversion to books showed a fine impartiality, extending across the whole spectrum of literature, history, philosophy, science, and what was known by then (the late 1940s) as social studies. But had I been forced to choose, I would have singled out literature and history as the reading I disliked most. Science at least had some discernible practical use, and you could have fun solving the problems in the textbooks with their clear cut answers. Literature and history had no apparent application to my experience, and any boy in my school who had cultivated them—I can't recall one who did—would have marked himself as a sissy.

As a middle-class Jew growing up in an ethnically mixed Chicago neighborhood, I was already in danger of being beaten up daily by rougher working-class boys. Becoming a bookworm would only have given them a decisive reason for beating me up. Reading and studying were more permissible for girls, but they, too, had to be careful not to get too intellectual, lest they acquire the stigma of being "stuck up."

In *Lives on the Boundary*, a remarkable autobiography of the making of an English teacher, Mike Rose describes how the "pain and confusion" of his



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# *disliking* BOOKS

working-class youth made "school and knowledge" seem a saving alternative. Rose writes of feeling "freed, as if I were untying fetters," by his encounters with certain college teachers, who helped him recognize that "an engagement with ideas could foster competence and lead me out into the world." Coming at things from my middle-class perspective, however, I took for granted a freedom that school, knowledge, and engagement with ideas seemed only to threaten.

My father, a literate man, was frustrated by my refusal to read anything besides comic books, sports magazines, and the John R. Tunis and Clair Bee sports novels. I recall his once confining me to my room until I finished a book on the voyages of Magellan, but try as I might, I could do no better than stare bleakly at the pages. I could not, as we would later say, "relate to" Magellan or to any of the other books my father brought home—detective stories, tales of war and heroism, adventure stories with adolescent heroes (the Hardy Boys, *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates*), stories of scientific discovery (Paul de Kruif's *The Microbe Hunters*), books on current events. Nothing worked.

It was understood, however, that boys of my background would go to college and that once there we would get serious and buckle down. For some, "getting serious" meant prelaw, premed, or a major in business to prepare for taking over the family business. My family did not own a business, and law and medicine did not interest me, so I drifted by default into the nebulous but conveniently noncommittal territory of the liberal arts. I majored in English.

At this point the fear of being beaten up if I were caught having anything to do with books was replaced by the fear of flunking out of college if I did not learn to deal with them. But though I dutifully did my homework and made good grades (first at the University of Illinois, Chicago branch, then at the University of Chicago, from which I graduated in 1959), I continued to find "serious" reading painfully difficult and alien. My most vivid recollections of college reading are of assigned classics I failed to finish: *The Iliad* (in the Richmond Lattimore translation); *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, a major disappointment after the paperback jacket's promise of "a lusty classic of Renaissance ribaldry"; E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, sixty agonizing pages of which I managed to slog through before giving up. Even Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Fitzgerald, whose contemporary world was said to be "close to my own experience," left me cold. I saw little there that did resemble my experience.

> *Even when I had done the assigned reading, I was tongue-tied. What was unclear to me was what I was supposed to say about literary works, and why.*

Even when I had done the assigned reading, I was often tongue-tied and embarrassed when called on. What was unclear to me was what I was supposed to *say* about literary works, and why. Had I been born a decade or two earlier, I might have come to college with the rudiments of a literate vocabulary for talking about culture that some people older than I acquired through family, high school, or church. As it was, "cultured" phrases seemed effete and sterile to me. When I was able to produce the kind of talk that was required in class, the intellectualism of it came out sounding stilted and hollow in my mouth. If *Cliffs Notes* and other such crib sheets for the distressed had yet come into existence, with their ready-to-copy summaries of widely taught literary works, I would have been an excellent customer. (As it was, I did avail myself of the primitive version then in existence called *Masterplots.*)

What first made literature, history, and other intellectual pursuits seem attractive to me was exposure to critical debates. There was no single conversion experience, but a gradual transformation over several years, extending into my first teaching positions, at the University of New Mexico and then Northwestern University. But one of the first sparks I remember was a controversy over *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that arose in a course during my junior year in college. On first attempt, Twain's novel was just another assigned classic that I was too bored to finish. I could see little connection between my Chicago upbringing and Huck's pre–Civil War adventures with a runaway slave on a raft up the Mississippi.

My interest was aroused, however, when our instructor mentioned that the critics had disagreed over the merits of the last part of the novel. He quoted Ernest Hemingway's remark that "if you read [the novel] you must stop where the nigger Jim is stolen by the boys. This is the real end. The rest is cheating." According to this school of thought, the remainder of the book trivializes the quest for Jim's freedom that has motivated the story up to that point. This happens first when Jim becomes an object of Tom Sawyer's slapstick humor, then when it is revealed that unbeknownst to Huck, the reader, and himself, Jim has already been freed by his benevolent owner, so that the risk we have assumed Jim and Huck to be under all along has really been no risk at all.

Like the critics, our class divided over the question: Did Twain's ending vitiate the book's profound critique of racism, as Hemingway's charge of cheating implied? Cheating in my experience up to then was something students did, an unthinkable act for a famous author. It was a revelation to me that famous authors were capable not only of mistakes but of ones that even lowly undergraduates might be able to point out. When I chose to write my term paper on the dispute over the ending, my instructor suggested I look at several critics on the opposing sides—T.S. Eliot and Lionel Trilling, who defended the ending, and Leo Marx, who sided with Hemingway.



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Reading the critics was like picking up where the class discussion had left off, and I gained confidence from recognizing that my classmates and I had had thoughts that, however stumbling our expression of them, were not too far from the thoughts of famous published critics. I went back to the novel again and to my surprise found myself rereading it with an excitement I had never felt before with a serious book. Having the controversy over the ending in mind, I now had some issues *to watch out for* as I read, issues that reshaped the way I read the earlier chapters as well as the later ones and focused my attention. And having issues to watch out for made it possible not only to concentrate, as I had not been able to do earlier, but to put myself into the text—to read with a sense of personal engagement that I had not felt before. Reading the novel with the voices of the critics running through my mind, I found myself thinking things that I might say about what I was reading, things that may have belonged partly to the critics but also now belonged to me. It was as if having a stock of things to look for and to say about a literary work had somehow made it possible for me to read one.

One of the critics had argued that what was at issue in the debate over *Huckleberry Finn* was not just the novel's value but its cultural significance: If *Huckleberry Finn* was contradictory or confused in its attitude toward race, then what did that say about the culture that had received the novel as one of its representative cultural documents and had made Twain a folk hero? This critic had also made the intriguing observation—I found out only later that it was a critical commonplace at the time—that judgments about the novel's aesthetic value could not be separated from judgments about its moral substance. I recall taking in both this critic's arguments and the cadence of the phrases in which they were couched; perhaps it would not be so bad after all to become the sort of person who talked about "cultural contradictions" and the "inseparability of form and content." Perhaps even mere literary-critical talk could give you a certain power in the real world. As the possibility dawned on me that reading and intellectual discussion might actually have something to do with my real life, I became less embarrassed about using intellectual formulas.

It was through exposure to such critical reading and discussion over a period of time that I came to catch the literary bug, eventually choosing the vocation of teaching. This was not the way it is supposed to happen. In the standard story of academic vocation that we like to tell ourselves, the germ is first planted by an early experience of literature itself. The future teacher is initially inspired by some primary experience of a great book and only subsequently acquires the secondary, derivative skills of critical discussion. A teacher may be involved in instilling this inspiration, but only a teacher who seemingly effaces himself or herself before the text. Any premature or excessive acquaintance with secondary critical discourse, and certainly with its sectarian debates, is thought to be a corrupting danger, causing one to lose touch with the primary passion for literature.

This is the charge leveled against the current generation of literature teachers, who are said to have become so obsessed with sophisticated critical theories that they have lost the passion


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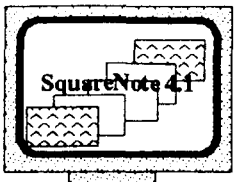

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they once had for literature itself. They have been seduced by professionalism, drawn away from a healthy absorption in literature to the sickly fascination with analysis and theory and to the selfish advancement of their careers.

This hostility to recent theory would not have been so powerful, however, if it were not overlaid on an older set of resentments that long predate the rise of deconstruction and poststructuralism, resentments at literature's having become an academic "field" to begin with. Today's attacks on literary theory are often really attacks on literary criticism, or at least on criticism of the intensely analytic kind that academics practice, which has always been suspected of coming between readers (and students) and the primary experience of literature itself. This resentment is rooted in anxieties about the increasing self-consciousness of modern life, which often leaves us feeling that we are never quite living but only endlessly talking about it, too often in some abstract professional vocabulary. The anxieties are expressed in our romantic literary tradition, which protests against the urban forms of sophistication that, it is believed, cause us to lose touch with the innocence of childhood and our creative impulses.

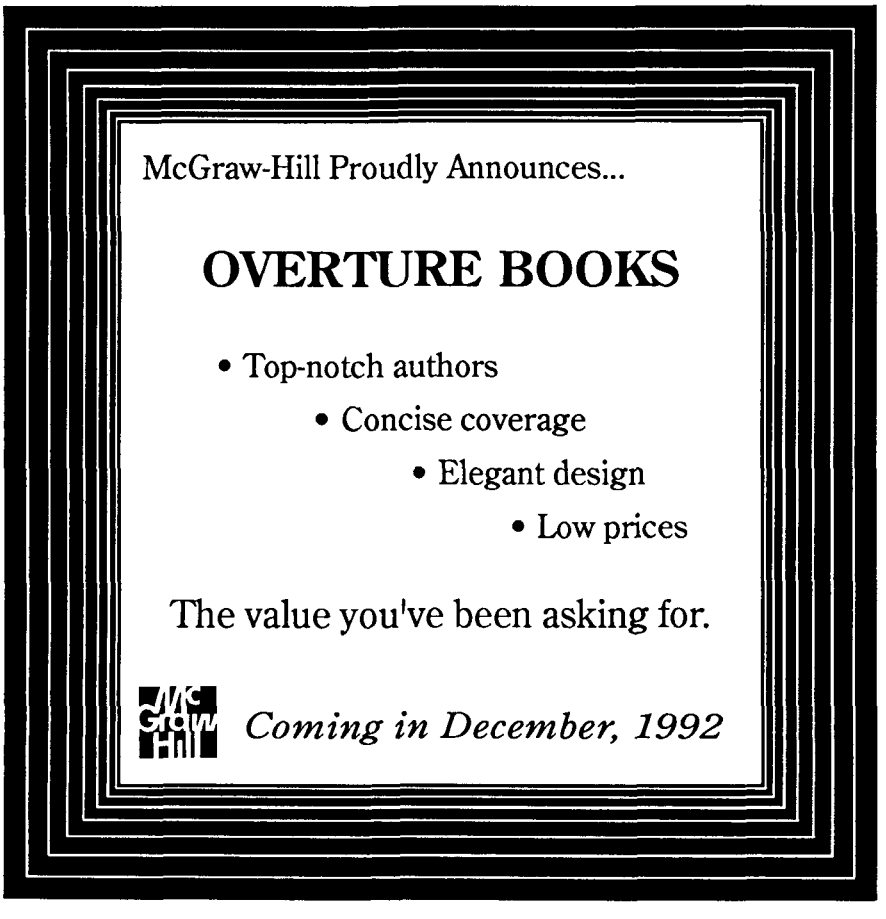
To those who have never reconciled themselves to the academicization of literature, the seeming overdevelopment of academic criticism with its obtrusive methodology and its endless disputes among interpretations and theories seems a betrayal not just of literature and the common reader but of the professor's own original passion for literature. In a recent letter to an intellectual journal one writer suggests that we should be concerned less about the oft-lamented common reader whom academic critics have deserted than about "the souls of the academics and literati themselves, who, as a result of social and professional pressures, have lost touch with the inner impulses that drew them to the world of books in the first place." What the writer of this letter cannot imagine is that someone might enter academic literary study

*The experience of literature is supposed to be innocent, that of criticism corrupting. I had to be corrupted first in order to experience innocence.*

because he actually *likes* thinking and talking in an analytical or theoretical way about books and that such a person might see his acceptance of "professional pressures" not as a betrayal of the "inner impulses" that drew him "to the world of books in the first place" but as a way to fulfill those impulses.

The standard story ascribes innocence to the primary experience of literature and sees the secondary experience of professional criticism as corrupting. In my case, however, things had evidently worked the other way around: I had to be corrupted first in order to experience innocence. It was only when I was introduced to a critical debate about *Huckleberry Finn* that my helplessness in the face of the novel abated and I could experience a personal reaction to it. Getting into immediate contact with the text was for me a curiously triangular business; I could not do it directly but needed a conversation of other readers to give me the issues and terms that made it possible to respond.

As I think back on it now, it was as if the critical conversation I needed had up to then been withheld from me, on the ground that it could only interfere with my direct access to literature itself. The assumption was that leaving me alone with literary texts themselves, uncontaminated by the interpretations and theories of professional critics, would enable me to get on the closest possible terms with those texts. But being alone with the texts only left me





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feeling bored and helpless, since I had no language with which to make them mine. On the one hand, I was being asked to speak a foreign language—literary criticism—while on the other hand, I was being protected from that language, presumably for my own safety.

The moral I draw from this experience is that our ability to read well depends more than we think on our ability to *talk well* about what we read. Our assumptions about what is "primary" and "secondary" in the reading process blind us to what actually goes on. Many literate people learned certain ways of talking about books so long ago that they have forgotten they ever had to learn them. These people therefore fail to understand the reading problems of the struggling students who have still not acquired a critical vocabulary.

The standard story of how we learn to read provides little help in dealing with such problems. Seeing criticism (and critical debate) as a distraction from the "primary" experience of literature itself, the standard story implies that the business of teaching is basically simple: Just put the student in front of a good book, provide teachers who are encouraging and helpful, and the rest presumably will take care of itself. The traditional maxim that sums up this view is that a good book "essentially teaches itself." The great teacher is one who knows how to let the book teach itself. And it is true that in the spell cast by such a teacher, it often *seems* as if the work is itself speaking directly to the student without intervention from the teacher's interpretations and theories. But this spell is an illusion. If books really taught themselves, there would be no reason to attend classes; students could simply stay home and read them on their own.

Nevertheless, the standard story remains seductive. Much of the appeal of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* lies in its eloquent restatement of the standard story, with its reassuringly simple view of reading and teaching: "...a liberal education means reading certain generally recognized classic texts, just reading them, letting them dictate what the questions are and the method of approaching them—not forcing them into categories we make up, not treating them as historical products, but trying to read them as their authors wished them to be read." What has gone wrong, Bloom suggests, is that instead of letting the texts themselves dictate the questions we ask about them, a generation of overly professionalized teachers has elevated its own narcissistic interests over those of the author and the students. These teachers, as Bloom puts it, engage in "endless debates about methods—among them Freudian criticism, Marxist criticism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstructionism, and many others, all of which have in common the premise that what Plato or Dante had to say about reality is unimportant."

*Our ability to read well depends more than we think on our ability to talk well about what we read.*

It sounds so commonsensical that only a desiccated academic could disagree. What could be more obvious than the difference between "just" reading books, as ordinary readers have always done, and imposing theories and isms on books, as methodology-crazed academics do? The question, however, is whether anyone ever "just" reads a book the way Bloom describes. We need go no further than Bloom's own quoted statements to see that he himself does not practice the doctrine he preaches. When Bloom invokes the names of Plato and Dante, he does *not* let these authors dictate the questions that govern his discussion but "forces" them into categories he, Allan Bloom, with his twentieth-century preoccupations, has "made up." After all, what did Plato and Dante know about


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Freudians, Marxists, cultural relativists, and the other contemporary targets of Bloom's polemic? In using Plato and Dante to attack the intellectual and educational trends of his own time, Bloom is not reading these writers as they wished to be read but is *applying* them to a set of contexts they did not and could not have anticipated. This is not to say that Bloom is unfaithful to Plato's text, only that he does not passively take dictation from Plato's text but actively selects from it for his own purposes—just as he accuses theorists of doing.

The philosopher Richard Rorty has succinctly pointed out the trouble with Bloom's "just read the books" theory.

> *The polite fiction that students will learn to make "intellectual moves" by being in the presence of those who habitually make a move is usually just that, a polite fiction.*

Rorty acknowledges that interpreters are obliged "to give authors a run for their money," respecting "an author's way of talking and thinking, trying to put ourselves in her shoes." He argues, however, that "it is not clear how we can avoid forcing books into 'categories we make up....'" We cannot help reading books, Rorty says, "with questions in mind—not questions dictated by the books—but questions we have previously, if vaguely, formulated." Rorty's point is not that reading is merely subjective but that it is inevitably *selective*. It is not that any reading of Plato is as good as any other but that even the most reliable reading has to select certain aspects of the text to emphasize, and the selection will be conditioned by the contingent situations in which the text is read. I would restate Rorty's point this way: As readers we are necessarily concerned with *both* the questions posed by the text and the questions we bring to it from our own differing interests and cultural backgrounds. Bloom thinks he can chose between "just reading" Plato and Dante and applying a "method" to them as do academic Freudians and Marxists. But Bloom's way of reading, which is influenced by his mentor the philosopher Leo Strauss, is as much a "method" as any other, bringing its special set of interests and principles of selection that are not dictated by Plato or Dante.

In teaching any text, one necessarily teaches an interpretation of it. This seems so obvious as to be hardly worth restating, but what follows from it is not obvious and is resisted violently by many who oppose the spread of theory. It follows that what literature teachers teach is not literature but criticism, or literature as it is filtered through a grid of analysis, interpretation and theory. "Remarks are not literature," said Gertrude Stein in a now-celebrated observation, and Stein was right: Teachers cannot avoid interposing "remarks" between literature and their students—remarks, we hope, that illuminate the works and help our students take personal possession of them, but remarks nevertheless.

If teachers cannot avoid translating the literature they teach into some critical language or other, neither can students, for criticism is the language students are expected to speak and are punished for not speaking well. Inevitably the students who do well in school and college are those who learn to talk more or less like their teachers, who learn to produce something resembling intellectualspeak.

By what process do we imagine students will learn this language? The assumption seems to be that it will happen by a kind of osmosis, as students internalize the talk that goes on



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in class until they are able to produce a reasonable facsimile of it. However, as a recent textbook writer, Gordon Harvey, points out, not all students "can make this translation, since it requires that they intuit a whole set of intellectual moves and skills ... too basic for experienced writers to notice themselves carrying out." The polite fiction that students will learn to make the "intellectual moves" by being in the presence of them for several hours a week is usually just that, a polite fiction.

Again, the problem is that what students are able to say about a text depends not just on the text but on their relation to a critical community of readers, which over time has developed an agenda of problems, issues, and questions with respect to both specific authors and texts and to culture generally. When students are screened from this critical community and its debates, or when they experience only the fragmentary and disconnected versions of it represented by a series of courses, they are likely to either be tongue-tied in the face of the text itself or to respond in a limited personal idiom, like the student who "relates to" Hamlet because he, too, had a mean stepfather.

In short, reading books with comprehension, making arguments, writing papers, and making comments in a class discussion are *social* activities. They involve entering into a cultural or disciplinary conversation, a process not unlike initiation into a social club. We obscure this social dimension when we conceive of education as if it were a process of contemplating important truths, values, and "cultural literacy" information in a vacuum and consequently treat such student tasks as reading assignments, making arguments, writing papers, and entering class discussions as if they were a matter of performing abstract procedures in a social void. Choose a topic that interests you, freshman writers are told; organize your paper logically around a central idea, and remember to support your thesis with specific illustration and evidence. Such advice is usually more paralyzing than helpful because it factors out the social conversation that reading, writing, and arguing must be part of in order to become personally meaningful.

Choosing a topic that interests you or making an effective argument depends on having a sense of what *other people* are saying, of what the state of the discussion is. Before my exposure to the critical debate on *Huckleberry Finn*, I had been trying to generate that discussion out of myself, something I did not know how to do. Exposure to the debate made me less of an outsider, provided me with a social community that gave my reading stimulus and direction. I could now discover what my teachers meant by "enjoying literature" because this had ceased to be a matter of vainly struggling to achieve some mysterious and rarefied experience. Relation to a community made the intimacy of literary experience possible.

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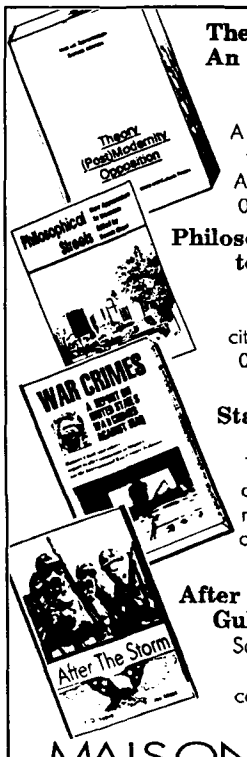


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# The Pit Bull Lady

## FROM CAMPUS TO KENNEL AND BACK AGAIN, VICKI HEARNE MAPS OUT HER TERRITORY

BY ADAM BEGLEY

Vicki Hearne's earliest conscious memory, from when she was about five years old, is of sitting in a yard with her dog beside her, a horse just beyond the fence, and a book of Kipling's poems in her lap. "I didn't have the concept 'poetry,'" she says, "but I decided that what I wanted was dog, horse, and whatever this was." She pauses for a drag on her Virginia Slim. "The next thing I knew I was on an elevator at the University of California at Riverside arguing with somebody about Wittgenstein."

Right now she's sitting in a Westbrook, Connecticut, diner waiting for a tuna melt. This is her regular lunch spot, five minutes from the kennel where she trains dogs (and their owners) and half an hour from Yale, where she was an assistant professor in the English department from 1984 to 1986 and where since 1988 she's been a visiting fellow at the university's Institute for Social and Policy Studies. The geography tells the same story as the flip, foreshortened autobiography she's just tossed out: Vicki Hearne shuttling back and forth between kennel and campus.

She thinks of herself as a vagabond, but there are some constants in this splendidly interdisciplinary life: She is always a poet, an animal trainer, a teacher, a lay philosopher, and a devoted arguer. All of these pursuits, except perhaps poetry, keep her tangled in controversy.



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She likes to call herself "Yale's dog trainer," but she pronounces the phrase with a smile that's playful and a little sad, as if she hadn't quite made up her mind what to do with the load of irony packed into such a title. Many of her former colleagues from the English department, which she left under something of a cloud, might smile that same smile if told that Hearne fancies herself officially sanctioned. A collection of epithets, all noticeably short on irony, drop easily from people's lips when her name comes up. "The Pit Bull Lady" is a tag she's worn for some time, and since the publication last year of *Bandit: Dossier of a Dangerous Dog,* an elliptical account of a Pyrrhic victory in the pit bull wars, it's become the quickest way to identify her: She likes pit bulls. To the media-wise who have read her articles in *The New Yorker* or *Harper's* and happened to catch her on "Larry King Live," she's "the Camille Paglia of animal rights," a comparison that first pegs her as politically incorrect and then acknowledges the quirky fascination she inspires. When asked for a comment, leftist academics regularly trot out the word "fascist"—but nobody wants to be quoted.

In mixed company, the safe thing to say about Hearne is how much one admires *Nervous Horses* and *In the Absence of Horses,* two slim volumes of poetry published in the early eighties. For instant fireworks, open up a discussion of her best book, *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name.* Although almost everyone can agree that it's beautifully written, original, and richly allusive, that's the end of all consensus. Her admirers point to the book's nuanced and challenging argument. Yale English professor John Hollander, a friend and mentor, says, "She makes of the relation between people and animals a kind of major metaphorical system for dealing with questions about human consciousness." Her detractors choke on the details of her training methods, which they see as part of a sinister urge to dominate. Duke English professor Jane Tompkins (who allows that Hearne "writes like an angel") recently reread "How to Say 'Fetch!'" a much-cited chapter from *Adam's Task.* "My final take?" says Tompkins, building up to the punch line. "I wouldn't want to be her dog."

Mainstream animal-rights philosophers are likely to ignore Hearne entirely on the grounds that her books don't belong to formal academic discourse—too well written, one supposes. Those who do condescend to address her arguments blast her either for displaying an anthropomorphism run riot (this from the camp that scoffs at the notion of assigning rights to other species) or vigorously defending animal training (circus tricks!), while offering no denunciation of the exploitation of animals for commercial or scientific purposes, and granting rights only to creatures involved in "committed relationships" with humans. To an earnest vegan undergraduate, say, Hearne is a nightmare of moral inconsistency: She illuminates with great skill and sensitivity the complicated psychological presence of domestic animals, and then refuses to subscribe to the notion that these or any other animals must necessarily be freed from the burden of a cruelly imposed captivity.

Hearne is not exactly beleaguered. She has two powerful friends in addition to John Hollander: Harvard philosopher Stanley Cavell and Yale literary critic Harold Bloom. Her books and even her poems are peppered with references to this venerable trio. She credits Hollander with being the first scholar to ask her, "What do you have in mind?"; and by her own account, the publication of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason* was a momentous event in her intellectual life. Cavell is happy to return the compliment, offering on the very day his MacArthur Fellowship is announced a rambling comment that culminates in an upbeat blurb: "Vicki Hearne is able to say something about the individual members of the animal kingdom in a way that strikes me as extremely interesting, very promising, and intellectually virtuosic."

Although the two have never met, Hearne and gonzo antifeminist Camille Paglia—who after all share a pal in Harold Bloom—could perhaps forge an alliance. Paglia not only welcomes comparison with Hearne but is profuse in praising her: "The interest in Vicki Hearne is very parallel to the new interest in me," she explains. "She's very similar to me—that is, she's a maverick." Moreover, Paglia shows a marked interest in relating the interaction between man and man's best friend to larger social issues: "You can spot a liberal," she says, "by his badly behaved dog"—or again, "Stupid people end up with stupid dogs."

After the tuna melt at the Westbrook Diner, it's back to the kennel, Silver Trails: The Animal Inn, for a consultation with "an ornery Neapolitan mastiff." "Ornery" is a word Hearne uses a good deal, mainly when she's talking about herself; she pronounces it in a way that makes you wonder how she found her way into a

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faculty lounge. It sounds like she's growling. Willard Spiegelman, chairman of the English department at Southern Methodist University and another Hearne admirer, points out that "by birth, upbringing, and temperament she's a redneck." Hearne was born in Texas and raised in the South, but more important, she looks the part—maybe because she's dressed for the kennel (her outfit consists of jeans and a green shirt printed with bold close-up portraits of bird dogs and terriers, a shirt that fairly screams "I am a dog person"), and maybe because she's downright messy: straggly hair falling in her face, gritty, yellowed fingernails curled and cracked.

As it happens, Rex, the Neapolitan mastiff, is more spoiled sloppy than ornery. The session lasts nearly an hour and a half and begins with twenty minutes devoted to changing Rex's mind about how to get out of the back seat of a station wagon. Rex weighs something like ninety pounds, and his idea has always been that as soon as Rachel (his owner, who is not sloppy) begins to open the door, he should throw himself into the breach and bull his way out, dragging Rachel after him in whatever direction appeals. Hearne's solution to this problem is to ask Rachel to open the door and then slam it as soon as Rex makes his move. They run through this routine over and over again. Rex puzzles over Rachel's odd behavior, and Hearne explains that the idea is to encourage Rex to choose a more elegant protocol. The goal is to expand communication between owner and dog, and so create a partnership. In the kind of partnership Hearne envisions, the owner's responsibilities, the coherence of her authority, are as important as the dog's obedience.

She cautions Rachel to adopt an aloof attitude, to avoid at all cost the suggestion that this is a tug-of-war. When Rex decides to sit quietly, Hearne tells Rachel to praise him, but of course when Rachel does, Rex bolts for the door. Slam. Back to square one. Ten minutes later, Hearne's system produces the desired result; it seems clear that given time, Rachel and Rex will become expert at the business of stepping decorously from the car.

**TO THE MEDIA-WISE, SHE'S THE CAMILLE PAGLIA OF ANIMAL RIGHTS—POLITICALLY INCORRECT AND QUIRKILY FASCINATING.**

In *Adam's Task,* Hearne tells the story of how she stopped Salty, a pointer bitch, from digging holes in the backyard: When standard corrections fail to dissuade Salty from digging, Hearne digs too. Together she and Salty make a special hole. Once they're done, Hearne fills the hole with water from a garden hose and dunks Salty's head. She repeats this ritual every day for three weeks regardless of whether Salty herself has been digging. The cure works. Hearne adds, in italicized commentary, that her hole-digging ritual "*has nothing to do with either punishment or authority, and if it is corrupted by either, then it becomes cruel.*" This disclaimer has not proved universally persuasive. The Salty episode is the kind that prompts a former colleague from the Yale English department to describe Hearne's training technique as "neo-Nazi." (It should be noted that Hearne anticipates this kind of name-calling and records instances of it in *Adam's Task:* "'Oh, yes. Vicki Hearne. She has a very repressive ideology. She keeps pit bulls, you know.'")

Hearne in action is as provocative as Hearne on paper. When she's working with Rachel and Rex, weighty issues are straining at the leash like a pack of unruly Neapolitans. What does it mean to say that Rex has changed his mind? Is he choosing a partnership or having his behavior modified by some ungentle conditioning? Does training have a syntax more sophisticated than stimulus and response? Does the communication between dog and owner constitute language? Is Hearne recognizing Rex's capacity for dignity or indulging in a thinly disguised fiction of control that perpetuates a hierarchy of repression? Because Hearne is also teaching Rachel—correcting her, praising her—it's impossible to avoid thinking about how, exactly, Hearne's ideas might be applied to the education (or training!) of very young children. As John Hollander maintains, "Her ideas about animal consciousness are always also ideas about human consciousness."

A linguist or an academic philosopher might ponder these questions in the seclusion of a cramped campus office. Hearne, as she's quick to point out, has been training animals for more than twenty-five years.

And she's been thinking all along—which accounts, in part, for the richness of her prose. Even if one's interest in animals extends no further than an aversion to cockroaches, one can enjoy Hearne's books for the wit she displays and the impressive range of reference—from Mr. T to *The Book of J.* She meditates on language and love and gender and the fallen state of Man. But sooner or later she returns to bedrock questions about the relations between humans and the other animals.

There are philosophers other than Cavell who take Hearne's work seriously. Cora Diamond, for example, who has been teaching ethics at the University of Virginia for twenty years, regularly recommends Hearne's writings to her students. But complaints abound concerning the narrow limits of Hearne's inquiry. "There are big issues she doesn't address or that she addresses flippantly," says Deborah Slicer, an animal-rights activist and a philosophy professor at the University of Montana. The "big issues" Slicer has in mind are the distribution and use of power, and the nagging question of exploitation. "When I first read *Adam's Task,*" she adds, "I was so taken with the things Hearne was doing



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that I decided I could just bracket all those big issues for the sake of following her through this limited but really very interesting project."

Tom Regan, a North Carolina State University philosopher who is a vehement proponent of animal rights, insists that Hearne "is on the side of truth—that is, she sees in the other animals that humans routinely interact with capacities like our own: Not only do they feel pain and pleasure, but they form beliefs about the world; they remember, anticipate, and plan." But like Slicer, Regan regrets that Hearne doesn't act on the ethical implications of her insight, that she won't, for example, denounce the way we treat production animals (pigs, cows, chickens), which are after all psychologically similar to companion animals (dogs, horses, and parakeets). "She doesn't get it," says Regan. "She doesn't get the moral contradiction between acknowledging kinship with these other animals and then authorizing their commercial exploitation."

**WHEN SHE'S WORKING WITH RACHEL AND REX, WEIGHTY ISSUES ARE STRAINING AT THE LEASH LIKE A PACK OF UNRULY NEAPOLITANS.**

"The animal-rights movement has made discourse about animals something everyone's eager to stick their nose in," says Hearne. "The less they know the more eager they are to do it." When she argues, she bases her remarks on firsthand experience—what she knows, what she's observed. Ask her point-blank about an animal's rights, and she'll explain in an exasperated tone of voice, "Just like our rights. They depend entirely on what you can know about your rights and what rights you have the capacity to understand and to claim in relationship to some particular person or entity. Rights are a function of a reciprocal relationship."

If you're foolhardy enough to try asking her what rights a chicken has in relation to Frank Perdue (assuming Frank owns the chicken), you'll get a testy answer, just shy of ornery on the growl meter: "I don't know Frank Perdue. Chickens are not my topic. One of the things I believe in is not talking about things you don't know anything about." In a *Harper's* essay published last September called "What's Wrong with Animal Rights," she celebrates the various ways in which animals achieve and express their happiness. "There is a rhinoceros," she writes, "whose happiness, as near as I can make out, is in needing to be trained every morning, all over again, or else he 'forgets' his circus routine, and in this you can find a clue to the slow, deep, quiet chuckle of his happiness and to the glory of the beast." For Hearne, to work with an animal in a responsible manner is to create a moral community in which rights can be recognized. It is people who know nothing of this kind of relationship, she argues in the *Harper's* essay, who "liberate snails and charge that goldfish at the county fair are suffering." She won't talk chickens, she's mildly cautious about the rhino, but to paraphrase the commercial, Hearne knows dogs.

And yet it's dogs, more often than not, that get her into trouble. *Bandit* is about a three-year wrangle over the fate of a dog deemed vicious by the state of Connecticut and sentenced to death. The legal history is convoluted (Bandit, an American bull-


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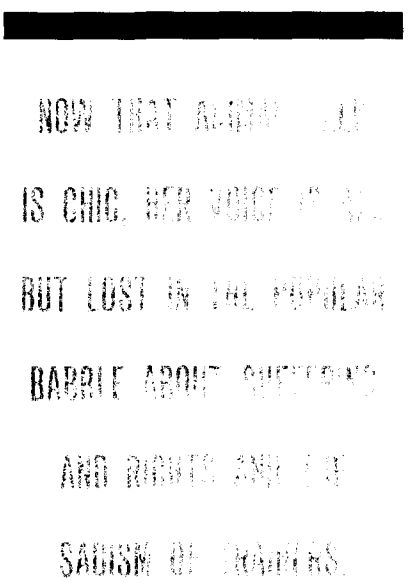
dog, survived the disposal order but has been placed in Hearne's custody—thus separated from his owner—and cannot appear in public without a muzzle); Hearne's account is convoluted, too. Unfortunately, the weaving between the world of ideas and the world of canines, which worked so well in *Adam's Task,* fails in this case to bind a coherent whole. Moreover, the tone of *Bandit* is shrill, almost hysterical. Hearne anticipates this objection: "Fear, anger, paranoia—these are the usual responses," she writes, "of anyone involved in a highly publicized animal question." In a sense, the book is about going astray, about how an animal poet, as she calls herself half in jest, gets mired in legal, philosophical, and emotional quicksand. Only occasionally, as when she rails against what she sees as the latent racism that animates much of the anti-pit bull fervor (Hearne contends that a lot of the hostility towards the dogs masks hostility toward their mostly black and Latino owners) does her voice, the compelling voice of *Adam's Task,* ring true.




It was as an animal poet that Hearne first entered the academy. She was reared on or near military bases around the South (her father was in the Air Force) and attended college at the University of California at Riverside. After earning her degree in English in 1970, she started graduate school but walked out of the department six weeks into her first term—"I headed straight for the kennel and the stable," she says. Then in 1975, on a whim, she applied for a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford and to her astonishment received it. So she gave up her training business and moved to northern California to write poetry under the tutelage of Donald Davie, an experience she treasures, though she adds, "committing myself to the university seemed an odd thing to do."

The University of Texas Press published her first book of poems in 1980. An Ingram Merrill Foundation grant allowed her to spend a year on the essays that eventually became *Adam's Task,* and those essays began appearing in *Raritan.* In 1981 she was offered the choice of two jobs: assistant to a veterinarian or lecturer at UC Riverside. If not for her bad back, she claims, she'd have taken the job with the vet. Instead she became an academic.

The next step came in 1984 when she assumed the duties of an assistant professor in the English department at Yale. She was offered a tenure-track position, an unusual appointment in that the university accepted her poetry and a smattering of published prose in lieu of a Ph.D. (it was Hollander and Bloom who first brought her to Yale to read her poetry). Unlike other junior faculty, she did not teach the usual load of undergraduate survey courses. She taught poetry and prose workshops, and was by all accounts very popular with her students.

She left after four semesters. When asked why, she explains again that she's a vagabond. "After two years I thought, hhhnnn"—a shrug and a pause help convey the idea of nameless dissatisfaction. "I resigned and decided I would train dogs and be an intrepid girl reporter" (at the time she was writing a column about animals for the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*).

There are more than several versions of the history of Vicki Hearne at Yale; some are about the eccentricity of Hearne, others about the rigidity of the academy. A half-dozen of her former colleagues insist that she was asked by the department to resign, but as Margaret Ferguson, now a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, explains with a remarkably appropriate metaphor, "It's really a chicken-or-egg question. She wasn't happy there, and they weren't happy with her." Whatever the manner of her going, she left behind a trove of anecdotes, some of them possibly apochryphal. They ought to be stale gossip by now, but these stories are still told with the kind of relish reserved for the latest department scandal. There was the "notorious" incident in which she loosed her dogs on a terrified colleague; the malodorous problem of sharing office space with Hearne when her pit bull bitch was in heat; the nuisance of having repeatedly to call the exterminator after Hearne and her dogs, but not their fleas, had vacated an office.

And yet when she calls herself "Yale's dog trainer," Hearne's sad and playful smile has little or nothing to do with the specifics of her two-year stint in the English department. In the early eighties, hers was a lonely voice reminding us that animals matter and that our relations with them matter, too. Now that animal talk is chic, her voice is all but lost in the din of popular babble about suffering and rights and the sadism of trainers; on campus especially, her views, once prized for their bold originality, are now anathema.

After Rex, the sloppy Neapolitan, has been carted off in his station wagon, Hearne introduces in stately succession three of her own dogs: an Airedale named Drummer, another named Texas, and Kep, a border collie. (These days she shares her house with four cats, six dogs, and her husband, Robert Tragesser, a former assistant professor of philosophy at Barnard.) The infamous Bandit is recovering from Lyme disease—"I don't haul him out just because people want to meet him," she explains.



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As she talks, part of her attention is always fixed on the dog she has with her. She issues commands (Sit! Heel! Stay! Stand!) in a calm, almost casual tone. The dogs obey instantly and unfailingly; she says a few words about the character of each and about the traits of the breed. When she tells a dog, "okay," he goes about his private business—which for an Airedale means a romp with anyone who's game. Texas and Drummer play the clown with happy enthusiasm, but a word from Hearne snaps them back, sober and ready, to her side.

Hearne mentions that she has a few students she's teaching to become trainers. And she has a few writing students, too—"unofficial students," as she puts it. She claims not to miss the classroom: "I learn as much from animals."

Would she go back into the academy? "It would have to be just the right situation," she says. "This sounds arrogant, but it's true: There's no answer to the question, 'What is your field?' because I have invented my field." She acknowledges, however, that she does need some kind of university affiliation. Her fellowship at the Institute for Social and Policy Studies, renewed yearly, gives Hearne access to the libraries and to "people who know more than I do about whatever"—all of which has helped her to finish her new book, *Animal Happiness*, which will be published in March 1993 by HarperCollins.

Would the academy take her back? "The ideal university," says John Hollander, "would have her at it."

*Adam Begley is a freelance writer and book critic.*


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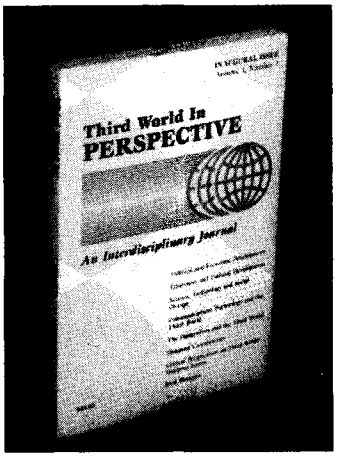


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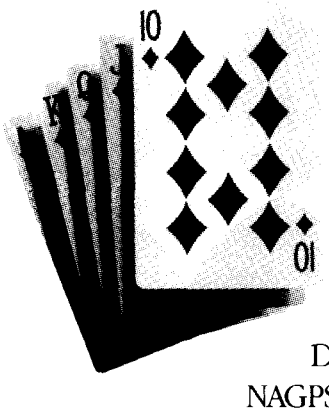

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# CHENEY'S COMMAND

## A Report from the NEH Trenches

BY DAVID SEGAL

Exhibit A in the debate over the supposed conservative drift of the National Endowment for the Humanities is NEH chairman Lynne V. Cheney herself. Cheney is an outspoken Great Books champion, an inveterate opponent of all things "politically correct," and, of course, a fearless supporter of such controversial NEH council nominees as New York University adjunct professor and *Commentary* contributor Carol Iannone, whose confirmation hearing set off a national ruckus last year. In recent months Cheney has also come under attack for what critics deem an evisceration of the NEH's grants-review process. In the April 22 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, for example, several applicants whose grants were rejected accused Cheney of everything from straightforward ideological bias to waging an out-and-out witch-hunt against left-of-center scholars. The gist of their complaint? That Cheney wields her veto power like a forestry tool, axing projects that don't happen to adhere to her narrowly construed party line.

Then, in July, after the Senate approved eight of her nominees—at least four of whom belonged to the National Association of Scholars—the charges began verging on the eerily censorious. Left-leaning scholars showed themselves off-puttingly eager to expose a fifth column in the NEH, as when Gerald Graff, a founder of Teachers for a Democratic Culture, told a *Chronicle* reporter, "We intend to continue to try to create more public awareness of the way in which the NEH is simply becoming a branch office of the National Association of Scholars."

But conversations with six recently departed NEH staffers, two former chairmen, and six former national council members, as well as Cheney herself, paint a less black-and-white picture. According to Cheney's former subordinates, complaints about the way Cheney deploys her veto power largely miss the point. The increasingly rightward bent of the NEH has little to do with Cheney's unilateral actions; the ten times she reversed council decisions last quarter might make her an active chair, but what about the 497 decisions she did not oppose? Cheney's stewardship of the NEH is distinguished from that of her predecessors—even from the once-reviled but now rather fondly missed William Bennett—by a micromanagerial style at once iron-fisted and discreet. Cheney enforces agencywide ideological conformity not so much by kicking individual applications back downstairs as by neatly arranging things so that such kicking is rarely necessary.

Not that Cheney has shut out cutting-edge scholars altogether. There's simply too many of them not to get a sliver of the NEH's pie ($175 million in 1991, admittedly a smallish sum but far and away the greatest source of humanities funding in the country). But Cheney has spent so much time denigrating—and so little money funding—the scholarship of "isms" that many scholars no longer even bother to approach the NEH for support.



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And though cutting away at jargon-laden deadwood renders an important service to our national intellectual life, there is much to suggest that Cheney is not a very judicious pruner, that she is blind to the difference between trendy fluff and serious, innovative work with integrity and value. A case in point is a recent application from American University for $138,721 to fund a summer institute for college teachers to examine Renaissance art from feminist and revisionist viewpoints. Sound subversive? Well, it actually included such mainstream figures as Larry Silver, the president of the College Art Association, and it received four ratings of "excellent" and one of "very good" from a peer review panel—something like getting straight 10's and a 9.5 from the Russian judge. It was also recommended for funding from the full national council. Cheney vetoed it, citing some critical remarks from two of three outside reviewers.

But the occasional veto aside, most of Cheney's tampering is hard to see, some is difficult to attribute to her, and all of it is nearly impossible to get ex-staffers to discuss on the record. There may be an agency headed by a more feared chairperson—but it's unlikely. Even former employees safely ensconced in jobs outside academia blanch at the thought of incurring Cheney's wrath. "You disagree with her and she's angry," says one former staffer. "You get her angry once and you'll never do it again." Nearly everyone who worked for her was convinced that speaking frankly about her on the record would, at a minimum, precipitate the most unpleasant phone calls of their lives.

It would also, many claimed, ruin their chances of getting an NEH grant, not just for themselves but for any institution to which they are connected. Cheney has denied blackballing anyone, but her staff, both past and present, is not buying it. Indeed, on a number of occasions program officers have informed prospective applicants who actually have disagreed with Mrs. Cheney—or who are merely likely to—that their names are a proposal's kiss of death. As one former employee puts it, "She knows how to hold a grudge."

All of Cheney's predecessors at NEH enjoyed the same unfettered power, but none, according to her staff, has used it as vigorously or to such clearly political ends. Cheney's agenda is apparent first at the level of the peer review panel, the initial hurdle of every proposal. Prior to Cheney, NEH staff assembled these panels with virtually no interference from the chair. That practice has changed. "Senior administrators are active in vetting the panels now," says a former staffer who worked under both Bennett and Cheney. "Before panels are composed, a list is sent to the chair and she makes it clear if any are acceptable." Another ex-staffer explains, "Our division would spend months looking for panelists who'd pass muster. It got harder and harder to get people through."

**"YOU DISAGREE WITH CHENEY ONCE AND SHE'S ANGRY," SAID A FORMER STAFFER. "YOU GET HER ANGRY ONCE AND YOU'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN."**

Cheney denies that she meddles; in my interview with her, she describes herself as, well, helpful. In her travels around the country, she says, she collects names of people she thinks would make good panelists and passes them on to her staff. In any case, she doesn't consider the panels important; as she told me in our conversation, "They're not even in my legislation." Actually, panels *are* in the NEH's legislation, although the law leaves it up to the agency whether or not to use them. And until October of 1990, the law demanded that the panels include "individuals who have exhibited expertise and leadership in the field under review, who broadly represent diverse characteristics in terms of aesthetic or humanistic perspective and geographical factors, and who broadly represent cultural diversity." When the act, which covers both the National Endowment for the Arts and the NEH, was rewritten in 1990, a year when the NEA was coming under sharp attack, legislators made culturally diverse panels mandatory for the NEA but dropped the NEH from the clause, apparently inadvertently.

As for the council, Cheney's preference for ideological homogeneity is by now well known: She may tout the racial and gender diversity of her council choices, but that's like touting the diversity of a six-pack of Pepsi because the cans are from different states. Post-Iannone, she has generally picked scholars whose records are unassailable but whose academic appetites are, almost across the board, the same as hers. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr., the blustering Harvard University government professor with the distinction of being the sole member of the university faculty to vote against founding a women's studies program, is the new prototype: unimpeachable credentials and an eagerness, as he told *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, to "sound the guns against those in the humanities who want to destroy the greatness of our intellectual past."

But more significantly, and a lot more quietly, Cheney has restructured the council's meetings so that their input counts for less than it used to. During Bill Bennett's tenure, according to a former staffer, they got summaries of all the proposals under consideration, some of which Bennett "flagged" for closer scrutiny. But members were encouraged to seek out the complete file on whatever full proposals *they* found interesting. Cheney, on the other hand, circulates all the summaries plus up to twenty full proposals that *she* thinks warrant close attention. It's a vast welter of pages and there's less time to get through it all; Bennett sent his summaries four weeks before the meeting, whereas Cheney sends her material out with as little as two weeks to spare. "It used to be that members brought their own



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# CHENEY'S COMMAND

agendas each time," says a former staffer. "Now they just bring hers."

If a council member needs a stronger hint about what Cheney has in mind for a given project, the chairman is not above doing a bit of lobbying for her point of view. This may consist of no more than a phone call and a gentle nudge, but it usually does the trick. After one 1991 council session, one member sheepishly reported changing a vote after a talk with "the lady upstairs."

The upshot of these tinkerings is that quarterly council meetings, which were once long, contentious, and stimulating, are now brief and tedious. Here's how the meetings used to be run, according to former council chairman Ron Berman, now at the University of California at San Diego: "We'd arrive Wednesday and do some preliminary work that evening. Then we'd break up into committees and work all day Thursday, and all day Friday the full council would convene and discuss their decisions, breakfast to dinner. It was exhausting." Contrast this to the most recent council meeting last May, in which all discussion of grants was scheduled for Thursday between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M.—with a break for lunch. Friday morning is carved into five-minute segments for reports on what the committees have decided, and there is virtually no discussion or challenges to those decisions. "The Friday session is rubber stamping at a fairly frenetic pace," says Bob Hollander, a professor at Princeton who was appointed twice to the council, first by Nixon in 1973 and later by Reagan in 1986. Hollander believes that the council has been so marginalized that he was surprised to hear people waxing irate about who was on it. "During the debate on Iannone, colleagues would say to me, 'Why are they fighting this? The position is so unimportant.' They were right."

The real locus of power and administrative muscle in the NEH is a trusted and insular circle of six people: Deputy Chairman Celeste Colgan, Special Assistants to the Chairman Susan Prado and Lynne Munson, General Counsel Anne Neal, Director of Public Affairs Claire del Real, and Assistant Chairman for Programs and Policy Jerry Martin. It is through this "fifth-floor mafia," as they are known in the agency, that Cheney conducts virtually all of her dealings with the staff. They meet up to three times a week at 4 P.M. in the chairman's office to strategize about policy, which they typically then announce to the agency professionals. "The rest of the staff are then treated as functionaries who carry out these decisions," says one person familiar with the agency. Even contact between Cheney and division directors is kept to a minimum; it's not unusual for them to go three months at a time without a face-to-face discussion.

Unlike the kitchen cabinets of previous chairmen, these six—with the exception of Jerry Martin, who was head of University of Colorado at Boul-


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**IN 1984, UNDER WILLIAM BENNETT, THE NEH PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF CONSISTED OF TEN PEOPLE. UNDER LYNNE CHENEY, IT BALLOONED TO EIGHTEEN.**

der's philosophy department—have little experience with the academy. Celeste Colgan, who runs day-to-day operations, has a Ph.D. in British literature but spent the bulk of her career as the chief financial officer of a consortium of forest products manufacturers. None of the others have held academic positions of any kind. Lynne Munson is 24 years old and got her B.A. two years ago. This mirrors Cheney's own tenuous relationship to the academy: a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and "*maybe three or four years*" spent as a college instructor (according to del Real, who was unable to be more specific). The bulk of Cheney's career has been her work as a writer and editor, principally for the local glossy, *The Washingtonian*. She's also written three books, including a satiric novel of White House intrigue co-authored by a former Bush speechwriter, Victor Gold.

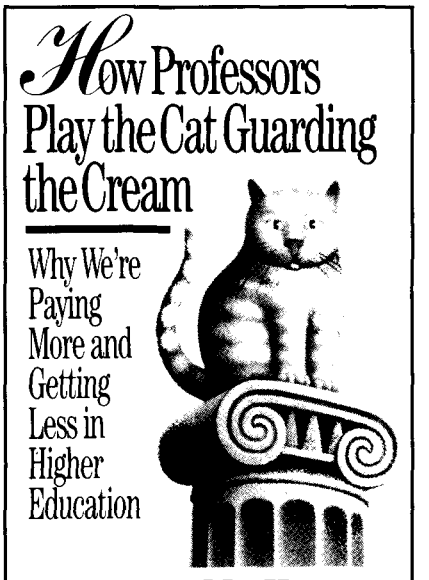
Another of Cheney's innovations at the NEH is the expansion of the public relations department. In 1984, under Bennett, it consisted of ten people; under Cheney, it ballooned to eighteen. Nearly doubling the number of flaks allows Cheney to publish more and to polish her image, but it also keeps unfriendly faces at bay.

Getting past this line of defense isn't easy, as I found out last May when I landed an interview with her only after some preemptive maneuvering. (*The Chronicle*'s repeated efforts to get a response from Cheney to its April article began with a page full of faxed questions and ended with a page full of faxed answers written not by Cheney but by one of her flacks.) When I first contacted the agency, public affairs director Claire del Real, true to form, stressed how busy Cheney was and implied that a phone interview might be the best I could do. Two days later I faxed del Real, unsolicited, a short essay of mine that had just appeared in *The New Republic*; the piece ("Excuse Me," May 11, 1992) was a defense of politically incorrect humor. The call came that afternoon. "Could you be here at 2 P.M. Thursday?" del Real asked.

A short woman with a Republican bouffant of blond-highlighted hair, Cheney conveys intelligent poise as well as the brittleness of a hostess whose patience has been worn a little thin—Nancy Reagan with a Ph.D. Her office is white, well decorated, and large enough to park an F-15 jet in—the latter being a piece of hardware which, if she were ever interested, she could probably get a deal on through her husband, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, who appears in pictures scattered throughout the office.

For a person so notoriously outspoken in print—her quoted speech bristles with military metaphors—Cheney is remarkably reticent in person. It's not lack of opinions so much as extreme caution. She keeps her answers short and uninformative and invites along Claire del Real, who sits with us taping the interview and interjecting herself when a bit of fine tuning is necessary. "She didn't say that," del Real barks when Cheney makes a point she clearly only means rhetorically—that the NEA's staff is so underused as to be unnecessary. When I ask her to name her favorite book, she eschews classics for novelist Mark Helprin's recent *A Soldier of the Great War*.

The interview reveals less *what* she thinks than *how* she thinks. Throughout our talk she makes it clear that her view of the debate didn't allow for many shadings. "I won't accept the idea that we should only fund the cutting edge," she tells me, as though this was the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# CHENEY'S COMMAND

most reasonable position of her detractors. When I explain that critics believe that innovative work is underrepresented in the NEH's grants, she again caricatures the point. "Do I need quotas?" she says. "Do I need a quota for Hawthorne and Melville, too?"

Others who have tangled with Cheney describe her as no fan of nuanced debate. Gerald Graff remembers disagreeing with Cheney at a 1988 meeting—only to have her accuse him of relativism. "When you disagreed with her it was like her eyes would close and on her lids would be the word 'relativism,'" says Graff. "It's perfectly all right for someone in her position to have strong views, but it's not all right to be so intolerant of disagreement."

The NEH hasn't always been so politicized. In fact, when it was created in 1965, Congress worked hard to ensure that the agency remained free of politics. The chair was given a fixed term, which means that he or she need not tow any party line the way the head of, for example, the Department of Agriculture must to remain employed. The council seats rotated and were meant to be filled by people "with established records of distinguished service and scholarship." Party hacks, in other words, need not apply.

President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Barnaby C. Keeney, a widely respected historian of medieval England and the former president of Brown University, to the chairmanship. He picked for the council a group of academic heavyweights like architect I.M. Pei, philosopher and future president of the Guggenheim Foundation Henry Allen Moe, and Germaine Bree, the former chairman of the now-reorganized romance languages department at New York University. Nixon and Ford continued in roughly the same vein, nominating esteemed scholars, some conservative—like Irving Kristol, a principle architect of neoconservatism—and others not, like the path-breaking black historian John Hope Franklin. Nixon's choice for the chair was Ron Berman, a widely regarded conservative professor of literature.

**IT WAS UNDER A DEMOCRAT, JIMMY CARTER, THAT THE COUNCIL GOT ITS FIRST POLITICAL PATINA; HE APPOINTED NONACADEMICS WHO HAD WORKED IN HIS CAMPAIGN.**

It was under a Democrat, Jimmy Carter, that the council got its first political patina. Carter preferred members who sided with him on the down-home side of the elitist vs. populist debate then being waged in the humanities, and he appointed nonacademics whose main credential was having been active in his campaign. He also originated the spouse-to-House connection when he chose as agency head Joe Duffey, now president of American University and then a former education official and Yale professor of social ethics who also happened to be the husband of then–White House insider and Carter strategist Anne Wexler.

Under Reagan, the trend toward like-minded academics and unqualified cronies grew. A clear nadir came in 1984 with the "Meese class," a group made up of friends of future Attorney General Edwin Meese. Lowlights included Jean V. Smith, whose sole credential was being the wife of then-Attorney General William French Smith, and Robert Laxalt, the brother of another Reagan pal, Senator Paul Laxalt, whose highest academic achievement was being director emeritus of the Friends of the University of Nevada Press.


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So why all the fuss over a conservative bantamweight like Carol Iannone? Since council terms last six years, there have always been holdovers from previous administrations to keep discussions lively and to prevent any single agenda from gaining ascendancy. During Bill Bennett's chairmanship, for instance, he had few allies since most of his council members were Carter appointees. But three straight GOP Presidential victories have had their inevitable effect. And though past chairmen have had only modest input with the Office of Presidential Personnel about who will be nominated to the council, Cheney plays such a major role in this process that congressmen have called recent selections "Cheney's nominees."

Cheney's stridency throughout her tenure at NEH clearly stems from her sense that the academy is a perilous place for a conservative to carry on a rational discussion. The bunker mentality of her staff and her fondness for nightmare stories about p.c. on campus—related as though such intolerance were the norm, not the exception—suggest that she's confused what the vast majority in the academy recognize as the extreme for the center. Universities, for Cheney, are a sort of battle zone. As she explained to Henry Louis Gates Jr. in an exchange in *Humanities* magazine, her job put her "behind enemy lines most of the time" because "most of the people I deal with are not conservative; they're not Republican."

Viewing the academy as a homegrown Saddam nicely obviates the need for nuanced debate—these people are fanatics, so no use trying reason. But like the left's caricatures of the right, Cheney's rendering is not just inaccurate, it's unhelpful. It puts her in the sandbox throwing sand at the other brats and screaming, "No, *you* started it!" The shame is that she had a chance to be a quieting force in the dustup over political correctness and instead has used her position to turn up the volume.

"The debate has lost a certain amount of perspective," says Derek Bok, Harvard's ex-president. "In the sixties and seventies there was a very strong orthodoxy. In the forties and fifties when I was in school, there was a stifling conformity. There's more genuine, vigorous debate out there on a wider number of issues than ever before. But of course it's more exciting to pretend you've found some cancer destroying the academy."

Viewed in its proper political and historical context, political correctness is only the most recent of the American academy's arguments with itself. If Cheney were doing her job as its framers meant it to be done, she would be nurturing that debate. Wars have winners and losers; the humanities should not. As one former staffer puts it, "This debate shouldn't end with one side being ground into the dust."

*David Segal is an editor at* The Washington Monthly.

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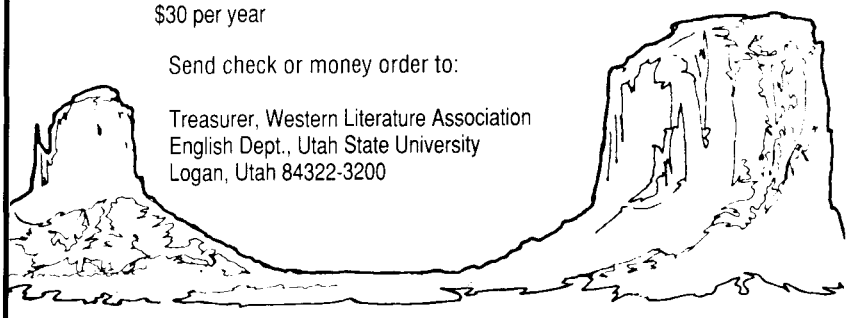

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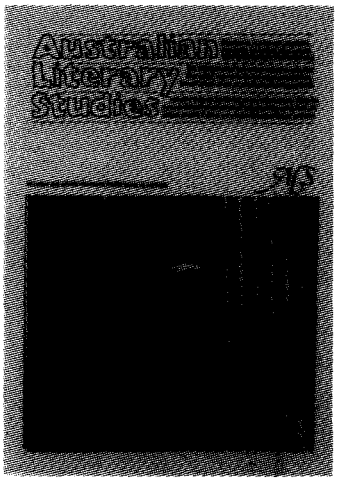


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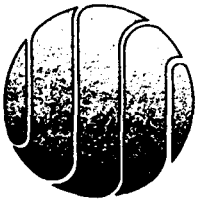

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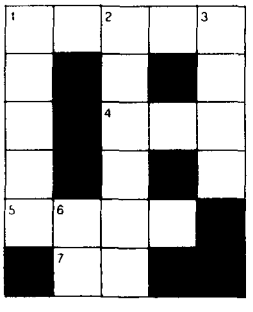

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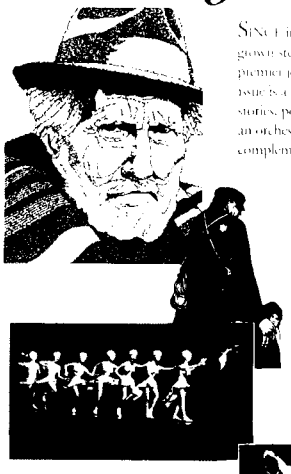

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# The BUY-BACK BLUES

## WHY TEXTBOOK RECYCLERS HAVE AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS DOWN IN THE DUMPS

BY JEREMY SCHLOSBERG

Perhaps the most compelling life lesson that college offers students is what it feels like to be broke. Really broke. All the time. With the price of textbooks scurrying ever upward—the $75 barrier has already been broken, as one $78 anthology of Romantic poetry published by D C Heath proves—this lesson hits home particularly hard at the beginning of each semester, when course-shopping time ends and book-buying time approaches. Who says students can't learn anything from a textbook?

So these reluctant consumers wander blithely past their local campus bookstore's new books section and head right for the used books. So they refuse to purchase $50 books unless they can save at least $15 on them. So in their zest for turning books into cash, they toss *Middlemarch* into the pile of econ and physics texts to be hauled back and sold. Who could this possibly hurt, except for the people who hold that all college grads should have complete collections of Penguin Classics on their shelves?

Two kinds of people, that's who—at least two kinds of people who say they've been hurt by it. The professors who wrote the textbooks and the publishers who issue them have lately been overheard making the following claim: The burgeoning trade in used books—a healthy $685 million business in 1991—is to blame for the skyrocketing price of textbooks, as well as, ultimately, the precarious state of the course materials industry.

Used-textbook wholesalers, on the whole a hard-nosed lot, are quick to disagree. But what's obvious to everybody is that students are about as eager to buy new textbooks as they are to pay full tuition. "Students have always complained about the prices of textbooks," says Gary Shapiro, deputy executive director of the National



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# The Buy-Back Blues

Textbook authors argue with more moral force. Mike Keedy, professor emeritus of mathematics at Purdue University and founder of the Textbook Authors Association (TAA), a five-year-old group based in Orange Springs, Florida, looks at the way songwriters and playwrights are compensated for each performance of their work and concludes that, by comparison, authors of pre-owned books get a raw deal. Moreover, if the used-book industry is responsible for a 80,000 drop in sales of a book that previously sold 100,000 copies, then the used-book industry is responsible for the loss of 80 percent of royalties to the authors. "The problem of used books is the number one problem in the minds of our members," says Keedy.

Compared to the way songwriters and playwrights are compensated for each performance of their work, authors of pre-owned books get a raw deal.

Then there's revision—the minute alteration of form and content that was once meant to keep books up to date but now exists primarily to justify the publication of an entire "new, revised" edition. "Every major publisher I've worked with has told me that the revision cycle was going to have to be shorter and that the main reason was the used-book problem," says Keedy, whose field, remedial mathematics, is not known for its late-breaking developments. "Revising things that do not need revision is a poor use of an author's time."

It's also a waste of a student's precious dollars, and students know it. Many of them borrow older editions from friends rather than buy new books. "They're basically the same," says one University of Wisconsin senior I know.

Textbook authors argue that such a Hobson's choice—to borrow a possibly outdated textbook or not use one at all—diminishes the educational experience. In a recent issue of the TAA newsletter, one member deplored the thought of students reading a pre-highlighted text. "Many (most?) students cannot resist the temptation to read only the highlighted passages, which are only one student's opinion of what's important," he wrote.

On the other hand, despite authors' and publishers' eagerness to fault them, used-book wholesalers are not up to anything more than exploiting the forces of free-market capitalism and technology. Let's face it: The days of student book exchanges and handwritten, pull-off-tag signs in student unions and post offices have long since given way to automation and the profit motive.

"The used-book business became well organized in the early eighties," says Francis O'Brien, director of finance and administration for Addison-Wesley, who links the rationalization of used-book wholesaling to the growth of low-cost computing power. Publishers began to "perceive the hurt," as he says, sometime around 1983 and 1984, watching helplessly as computerized wholesalers tracked demand and supply at universities nationwide, stockpiling and unloading inventory with striking accuracy.

By now, notes Hullett, "used-book wholesalers have the best-organized distribution networks in all of college publishing."

The payoff for this agile matching of textbook to course has been handsome: While new-book profit margins linger around one-fifth of the price, profit on a used book is half the price or more. New books, of course, are sold only once; a used book can be sold as long as its binding holds up.

As businesses go, it's mighty attractive. "Where else in publishing can you get into the business without a single dollar invested in royalty advances, creative, editorial, production, or manufacturing costs, or even paying for subrights?" ask consultants DeWitt Baker and Jim Hileman of B & H Consulting, in their 1987 report "Used Books and the College Textbook."

Indeed, some used-book wholesalers have taken their profits and used them to expand into bookstore management. Not all such marriages of used-book wholesale companies and bookstore management companies began that way, but however the connection was made, of the six wholesalers dominating the industry, five also run con-

Association of College Stores (NACS). But now, says Shapiro, such complaints have translated into what he calls "purchase avoidance."

Whose fault is this? Not ours, say the publishers: The used-book wholesalers made us raise our prices. Here's how that argument goes. As sales of recycled texts go up, the lifetime sales expectancy of new books goes down. (In 1981 used-book sales made up 15 percent of all course book sales; today that figure has climbed to 25 percent.) A book that once upon a time might have sold 100,000 copies over ten years is good for maybe 20,000 over three years. Print runs shrink. This means not only less direct revenue is derived from the book but plant and overhead expenses must be spread over a shorter period of time. Smaller press runs also increase the relative costs of paper, printing, and binding.

"A whopping piece of the price increase we see in new textbooks comes from the used-book phenomenon," says Jay Hullett, publisher of Hackett Publishing in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which specializes in philosophy, classics, and political theory texts. But publishers might not want to play the innocent victim just yet. After all, a skeptic might say that their knee-jerk reaction to used-book encroachment—raise those prices!—lacked, shall we say, foresight. A cynic might call it just plain foolish.



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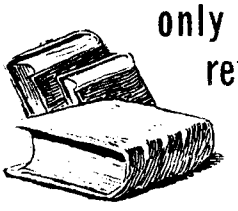
tracting companies that run college bookstores.

If you want an earful on how such vertical integration threatens all of textbook publishing, give Russell Reynolds a call. The eighty-one-year-old director of Professional Management Associates for College Stores is an indefatigable champion of independently run college bookstores, a group whose survival is threatened every time an outside contracting company takes another bookstore over. Reynolds raises one crucial point about the connection between the largest wholesalers and the largest college bookstore management companies: "One of the fundamental reasons for a wholesaler of textbooks getting into the leasing business is to have a monopoly on used books on the campus."

**The profit margin on a new book is only about one-fifth its retail price; profit on a used book is half the price or more.**



A monopoly, of course—or really any kind of privileged relationship between a used-book retailer and a supplier—helps both sides of the equation move books more quickly and easily: The wholesaler has unobstructed access to the shelf space, and the retailer can order in bulk from an essentially in-house supplier. More importantly, being linked to a bookstore gains a wholesaler access to the books being sold back in the first place. That, more than any other aspect of the business, is where the competition lies. The fight for a chance to buy back the textbooks is "a very competitive situation," says Fred Weber, director of marketing for Follett Campus Books, one of five divisions of the Follett Corporation. (One of the others is Follett College Stores, which operates more than 400 college book stores on lease around the country. By contrast, Barnes and Noble operates only 240.)

In fact, according to most observers, the only thing keeping the used-book industry in check and holding its market share to 25 percent rather than 35 or 40 percent is the perpetual shortage of used books. Demand, used-book buyers agree, overwhelmingly exceeds supply.

Weber disputes Reynolds's suggestion that the wholesalers are engaging in unfair business practices. For example, he explains, local bookstores don't streamline their purchases to the command of headquarters. "Most stores conduct buy-backs with their own staff," he says. Jade Roth, divisional book merchandise manager of Barnes & Noble's college division, agrees. "I'm not going to buy something just because MBS [a B&N used-book subsidiary] wants me to," she says.

But perhaps allowing oneself to be overly distracted by the nuts and bolts of used-book profit-making misses the main point, the one the publishers kept missing all along: that students are a textbook's ultimate consumers, that their needs must be recognized and met, and that these needs include the availability of off-price used books, because (remember our first lesson, class?) students are always broke.

It remains a little hard to understand how the publishing industry could have had so little sense and sensitivity that it decided the best way to offset sales declines was by passing along price increases to students. On the other hand, it's also hard to sympathize with a used-book network that trades books like so many orange juice futures. Maybe the buck should really stop with a legal system that requires professors to receive permission, often involving payment, before photocopying parts of books for course packets, while businesses that sell the whole book again and again neither need nor ask for permission, and certainly pay no fee.

*Jeremy Schlosberg is a freelance writer.*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# RESEARCH FILE

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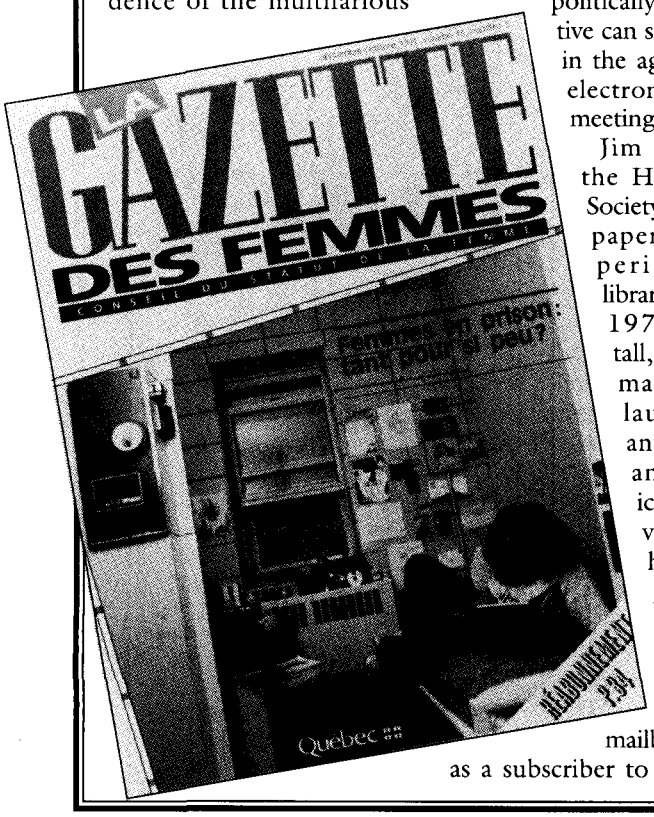
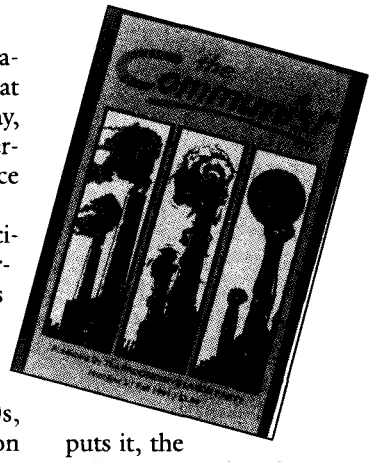
### STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS UNIT

If you happen to be on a scholarly quest for the voice of America, you needn't loiter in bus stations, bars, or bodegas waiting for that elusive primary source to show up. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin's Newspapers and Periodicals Unit is a couple of steps ahead of you. For more than a century, the society's librarians have been collecting the literature generated by an astonishing array of American cultists, hobbyists, and political activists— all evidence of the multifarious civic cultures that thrive Out There, beyond the beltway and the mini-mall. Here, in Madison, microfilmed or neatly stacked, are the kinds of titles that seldom appear in footnotes. An afternoon's investigation might turn up copies of *The Ice Screamer*, a newsletter for aficionados of old ice cream parlor scoops and dipper boxes, or *The Christian Conjurer*, a publication of the fellowship of Christian magicians; *The Nkrumaist*, the Pan-African Revolutionary Socialist Party's newspaper, or *The Egregious Steamboat Journal*, a must-read for steamboat buffs. In Madison you'll find a paper trail of proof that the quietly bizarre and the politically alternative can still thrive in the age of the electronic town meeting.




Jim Danky, the Historical Society's newspapers and periodicals librarian since 1976, is a tall, bearded man who laughs at any talk of an America on the verge of homogeneity. He holds a key to America's mailbox, and, as a subscriber to some of the more esoteric publications out there, he's got at least as good a sense as, say, David Lynch of what's percolating beneath the surface of American life.



The State Historical Society's library, which is particularly renowned for its collection of manuscripts on the civil rights and other radical and reform movements of the 1960s, contains some 2.3 million items in the field of American history. The society's collection of nearly 10,000 general-interest newspapers, dating from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, is the second-largest in the country, after the Library of Congress's. But the Madison library's true badge of distinction may be its stash of nearly 9,000 current periodicals, many of which are deeply and unapologetically weird and can be found in no other archive.

Unlike most major research libraries, says Danky, "we don't exclude popular or current materials from our net." The society throws wide and takes in quite a haul—from the wacky to the solemnly ideological, and from glossy proclamations to mimeographed testimonies.

On the whole, the Wisconsin collection adheres to traditional categories like religion, labor, and political movements. But what does that mean if the categories are rendered obsolete by the society's embrace of the untraditional? As Danky puts it, the collection "pushes the envelope of print and linear documentation." That is, it doesn't need to be a high-class publication to make it into this library, and might not even need to have a circulation over 100. The tracts, fliers, and papers, religious or secular, that under normal circumstances rarely make it as far as the recycling pile, are coddled in Madison, stamped and ironed flat if necessary, and eased into place on the yards and yards of gray metal shelves.

The Historical Society library houses the country's largest collection of Native American and African-American newspapers and magazines, from *The Choctaw Gazette* to *Burning Spear*, the newsletter of the African People's Socialist Party; of labor publications, from the Association of Flight Attendants' *Flightlog* to the New York firefighters' *Firelines* and of left-wing materials, prisoners' and soldiers' magazines, and women's periodicals, such as *Fighting Woman News*, which isn't a journal



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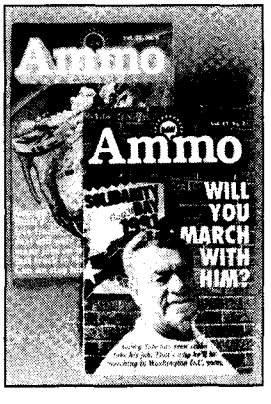
for Backlashers but for female martial artists. Danky and his staff have also amassed countless encyclicals issued by collectors and buffs, cataloging the nuances of the American acquisitive passion for everything from old church keys ("Just for Openers") to Funk aircraft.

Among the substantial store of materials representing the far right, you'll find newletters such as the Aryan Nation's *Calling Our Nation* and the *Posse Noose Report*, put out by the Posse Comitatus in Tigerton, Wisconsin, as well as the publications of David Duke's National Association for the Advancement of White People. In *The New Order*, a neo-Nazi publication out of Lincoln, Nebraska, you can read the latest installment in the "Fun Under the Swastika" series, in which the author brags about how, in his days as a placement interviewer for the Texas Employment Commission, he recruited disgruntled white job applicants to the Nazis and Ku Klux Klan by informing them that while there were good jobs available, whites could not apply because these positions were reserved for nonwhites as a result of affirmative action policy.




Other libraries collect religious titles, but here the notion of faith extends to dogmas usually excluded from the umbrella of traditional religion. The mainstream Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish materials make room for the Buddhist *Wheel of Darma*, Jimmy Swaggart's *The Evangelist*, and the kind of pamphlets thrust at you in airports by self-styled prophets.

In 1980, Danky put the society on the mailing list for every United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps publication. The military publications he now gets range from the how-to-fix-it comic book *P.S.* (*The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*) to the *Guantanamo Gazette*, the only English-language daily in Cuba. In 1989, Danky began subscribing to American embassy and consulate newsletters from around the world, and he is currently soliciting back issues to add to the microfilm archives. He speaks wistfully of acquiring newsletters from consulates under fire, such as Iran's in the last days of the Shah. Neither the military publications nor the consular materials have been comprehensively collected elsewhere, nor have they been studied in depth.

"For most of the stuff that is acquired," Danky admits, "the utility won't occur in my lifetime." Still, his enthusiasm is undamped; today he's feeling particularly elated because he's just gotten a good lead on a Jeffrey Dahmer comic book. "If you want to look at contemporary life in America," says Danky, "this is the place to come."

*—Julie Rigby*

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# Letters

*Continued from page 5*

that my husband was not "academically linked," he was rarely spoken to. If I explained my absences at "optional" meetings by referring to family responsibilities, my dedication to my degree was questioned; if I sought advice and counsel for my manuscript dealing with feminist literary theory, I was told that my work was "unsubstantial."

I studied Chaucerian symbolism while cooking dinners, modern British poetry in waiting rooms, American transcendentalism while driving the hourlong commute to campus and back home. (You haven't lived until Ralph Waldo gets entangled in the steering wheel while a triple-semi is passing you at high speeds in a rain storm.) Thanks to my family's tolerance for overcooked meals, to my own tolerance for undone chores, and to alert truckdrivers and commuters, I managed to keep a more than decent grade point average, conduct solid research projects, and present conference papers. Even so, my applications for the Ph.D. program were turned down. The rumors that reached me indicated that I wasn't "playing ball"; I didn't do the "political thing"; I didn't run for the cover of mentors who could smooth my way as long as I worshipped the researched ground they walked on.

If I ever thought my experience was unique, I was proven wrong time and time again by female friends in other grad programs and women breaking into professorships at other universities. Some had already learned how not to speak of their children or spouses or—heaven forbid!—that f-word,"politics". Like an underground railroad, we exchanged bits of information on how to stay alive in graduate school. Some of us managed to stay in and finish; some of us couldn't sustain the rat race of home-kids-spouse-grad school-research; some of us became independent researchers and writers existing outside the university system; some of us should never even have tried, given the horror stories the rest of us shared.

*White Palace* starring Susan Sarandon? How about *The Snake Pit* starring Olivia de Havilland?

**Susan A. Lichtman,** *Purdue University North Central*

## CENTRAL ASIANISTS ON THE MOVE

Your article on the upsurge of interest in Central Asian Studies ("Field Notes," June/July 1992) accurately captured the current excitement in the field. Alas, you also rightly depicted the inertia (to put the best gloss on it) and incomprehension of Columbia's deficit-bedeviled administration (as well as Harvard's) in responding to the new opportunities this field presents.

What you missed is that an enthusiastic group of faculty here at Columbia have decided to proceed on our own. Members of the several regional institutes (Middle Eastern, Southern Asian, East Asian, and Harriman, formerly the Soviet Studies institute), departments (political science, sociology, history, and Middle East languages and cultures), and the School of International and Public Affairs have banded together to revitalize the Center for the Study of Central Asia.

This wide participation illustrates a point neglected in your article: Central Asia is not just the former Soviet republics. The new Central Asia also includes Afghanistan, Xinjang, and Mongolia, and is linked with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, as well as Russia and China.

Building on our unique strengths in all these regions, we at Columbia are determined to make our institution a focus for study of and exchange with this area. We have already obtained a research grant and some support for teaching and are actively seeking ways to develop other programs.

**Barnett R. Rubin,** *Director, Center for the Study of Central Asia, Columbia University*

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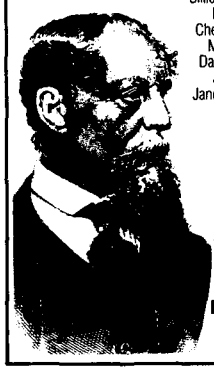

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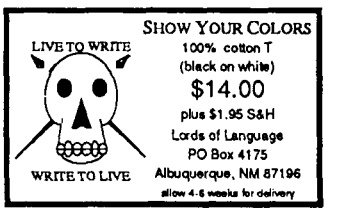


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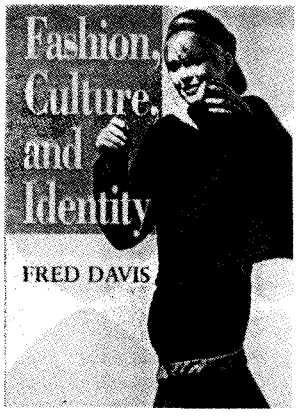


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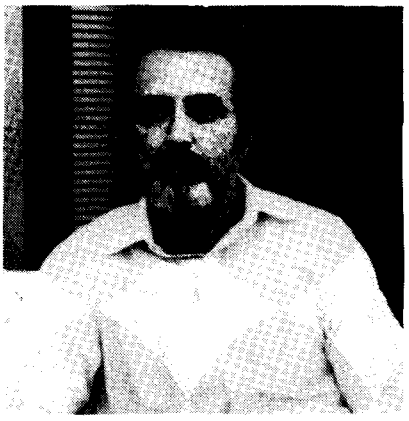

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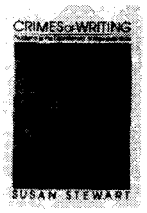


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